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Autosport

THE KEY QUESTION OF 2007

CAN KIMI CUT IT AT FERRARI?

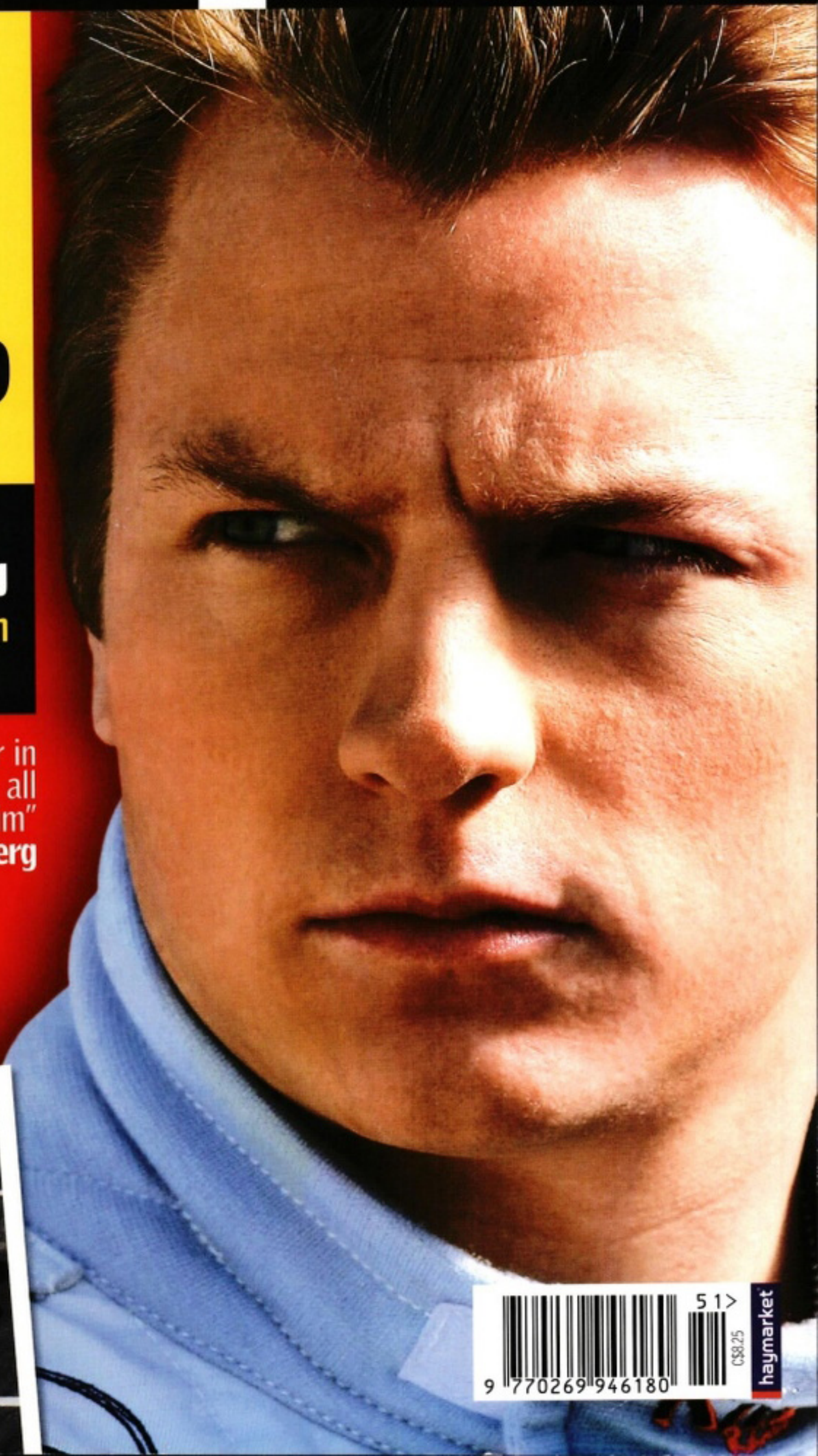
■ **Ron Dennis** ■ **Felipe Massa**
■ **Frank Williams** ■ **Keke Rosberg**

And many more... on whether Raikkonen has what it takes to win the 2007 title

"He's the fastest driver in the paddock and that's all Ferrari need from him"
Keke Rosberg

CLAY REGAZZONI

'Sometimes his driving was full of error, sometimes it was sublime'
Nigel Roebuck's tribute to a racing icon





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and analysis services*



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and parts manufacturing*



Machined parts



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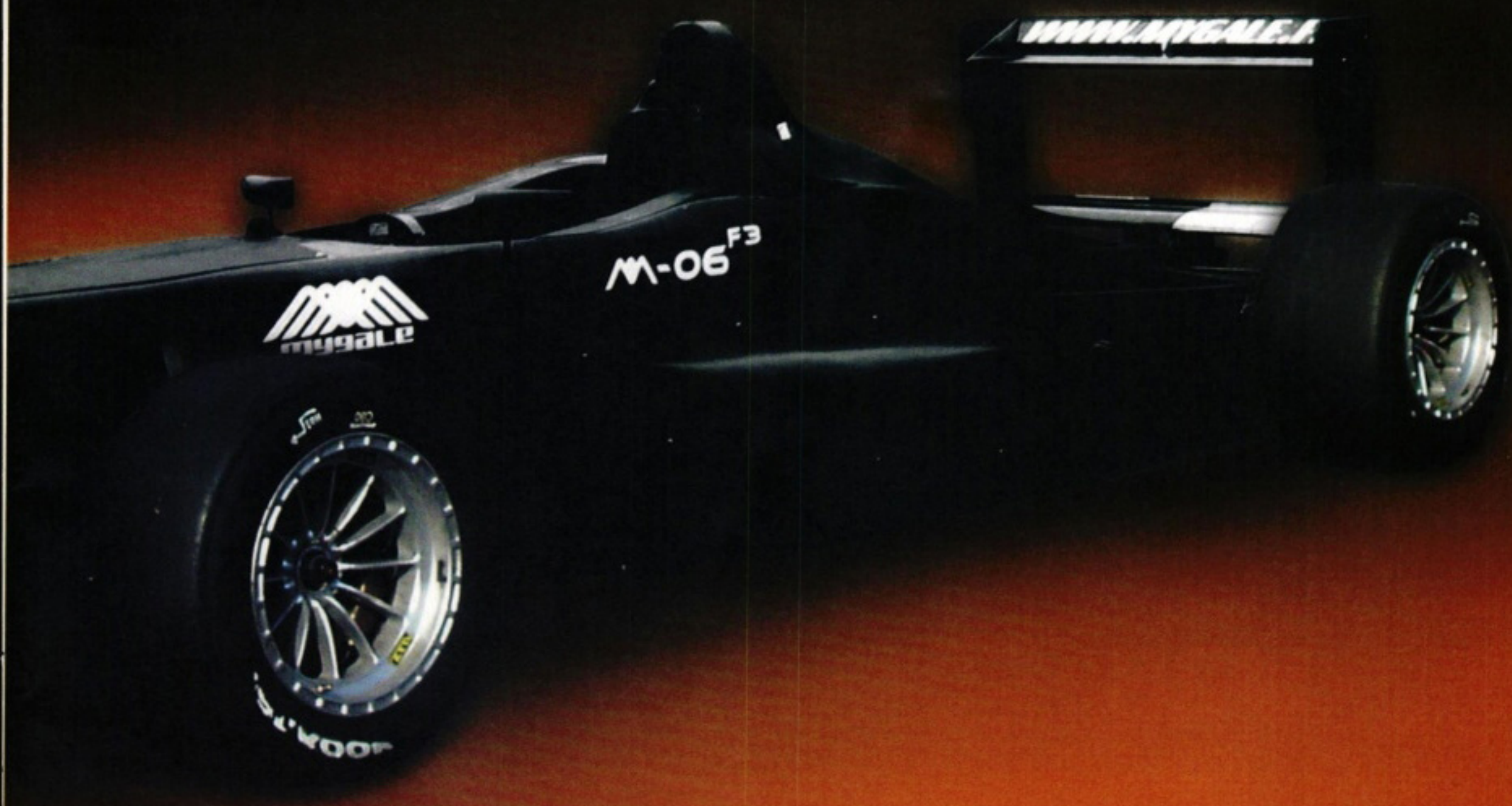
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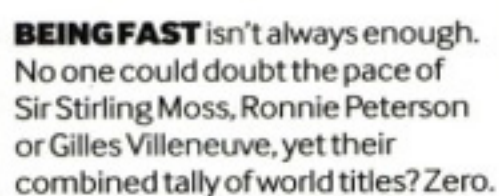


NEED A WINNING FORMULA ?



THE WINNER'S CHOICE

NEED: MORE THAN SPEED



For speed to be translated into Formula 1 success it also has to be mated to the best car, or at least something very close to the best. And while the 2007 cars have yet to hit the track, it would be an

enormous surprise if next year's Ferrari isn't one of the best out there. It would be even more of a shock if it was anything other than metronomically reliable. This, matched with the pace of Kimi Raikkonen, could prove to be an unbeatable combination.

So far in his 100-odd grands prix Kimi has demonstrated blinding speed, that's for sure. And if the Ferrari is the quickest thing out there, that will probably be enough. But does he have the other qualities needed to mount a championship challenge? The leadership skills, the motivational ability, the development acumen needed to see off a resurgent McLaren or a Renault team now in the habit of winning?

As we state on the cover, this is the key question of 2007 and we've assembled a long list of paddock experts to answer that question.

Also in this issue we remember the members of the motorsport community who passed away in 2006. As we were putting this together the news came through of Clay Regazzoni's fatal car crash. Most of us in the office are too young to have seen Clay in his pomp, but his legend had passed down to us through years of devouring this magazine.

One person who did know 'Regga' well was Nigel Roebuck, and he has written a fitting tribute to a driver who had plenty of speed and enormous character, but ultimately lacked that extra something required of a world champion.

ANDREW VAN DE BURGT
EDITOR

**"FERNANDO
ASKED ME FOR
ONE DAY WITH
HIS NEW TEAM"
FLAVIO BRIATORE**



THIS WEEK



PEUGEOT 905
Our man takes the wheel
of Peugeot's 1993 Le Mans
24 Hours winner!

CAN KIM CUT IT?

He's fast, yes, but can he carry on Schuey's good work at Ferrari? Formula 1 insiders speak out



Sure, he has the driving talent, but is that enough? Autosport investigates.

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VOL 186 NO 12



Giedo van der Garde joins Super Aguri, p11



Between a RoC and an unbuilt place, p10

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NATIONAL FOCUS
Reviewing the national scene,
including back-to-back titles
for Damien Faulkner



ALONSO GAINS VITAL TEST EDGE

McLAREN STOLE a march over rivals Ferrari before Christmas when it persuaded Renault to release double world champion Fernando Alonso for a crucial day of testing on the 2007-spec Bridgestone tyres, while simultaneously barring Kimi Raikkonen from doing likewise for the Prancing Horse.

Alonso, under contract to Renault until December 31, made a personal request to team principal Flavio Briatore to be allowed to test a McLaren for a single day in an unbranded car and overalls. He racked up over 250 miles in the MP4-21 and wound up third quickest on the day, despite running a reasonable fuel load.

The test enabled the team and driver to gain priceless knowledge of each other a full month earlier than expected. A buoyant McLaren team had already been encouraged by a series of quick Jerez times. Test driver Pedro de la Rosa set the best lap of the final test, after Alonso's 2007 team-mate Lewis Hamilton had topped the times at the previous week's session.

Although as ever it's impossible to judge fuel loads, post-season testing has been more relevant than usual because all the teams have been in the same place at the same time (three days at Barcelona followed by two three-day sessions at Jerez), and with the same Bridgestone tyres. The Japanese company provided just two types of dry tyres; the hard was used at Barcelona, and the soft introduced at Jerez, where the best laps were still 2-3 seconds off recent 'tyre war' times.

"I can say these tyres are much, much easier to drive," Toyota's Jarno Trulli told Autosport. "The window of the working range is much wider. They are much easier to run and to understand."

The former Michelin teams have clearly taken full advantage of the three tests, and in terms of laps completed Honda, BMW Sauber, Renault and McLaren top the table.

Poor weather at the first Jerez test hampered progress, but allowed drivers to sample the wet tyres.

The top teams were clearly keen to give their rookie drivers miles, with Kovalainen heading the rankings and Hamilton the next highest 2007 race driver in fourth (see graph). The Finn was also the only race driver to run on the maximum possible nine days, an honour he shared with Ferrari's Luca Badoer.

Teams also used the tests to make final checks on modifications to the reference engines handed over to the FIA at the end of the season. The FIA allowed them to make limited changes to optimise the V8s for the new 19,000rpm limit. Any details had to be passed to the governing body by December 15, by coincidence the last day of running at Jerez.

HONDA (1775 LAPS)

As usual, Honda made the most of its track time and completed more laps than anyone else, although plans were compromised by a rib injury that kept Jenson Button out of the car. That was good news for new test driver Christian Klien, who ultimately ran more laps than anyone bar Renault's Kovalainen over his seven days, and for James Rossiter, who enjoyed six days at the wheel and was an impressive sixth overall in the second Jerez test. Rubens Barrichello was fastest on the last day of the first Jerez test, but did not do the second. Marco Andretti ran on the final Jerez day (see page 8).

BMW SAUBER (1574 LAPS)

BMW kept things fair as Robert Kubica ran 543 laps in total and Nick Heidfeld just one fewer, despite having a day less in the cockpit. Sebastian Vettel got around half that mileage, while 'spare' tester Timo Glock had a day at each circuit. The team seemed less comfortable with the switch of tyre brands than other ex-Michelin runners.

RENAULT (1540 LAPS)

The busy Heikki Kovalainen set the second fastest overall time at the second Jerez test while running the new 2007 gearbox. Giancarlo Fisichella ran for all six days at Jerez, after Nelson Piquet Jr drove the second car at Barcelona.

McLAREN (1429 LAPS)

Alonso's late appearance in Pedro de la Rosa's usual seat equalled the news value of Mika Hakkinen's comeback run at Barcelona. Hamilton missed only the first day at Jerez (where Gary Paffett drove), but otherwise ran as much as possible, twice topping the day's times at Jerez.

TOYOTA (1333 LAPS)

Uniquely, Toyota had a day to itself at Barcelona and again at the second Jerez test, but it evened out at nine days overall. Jarno Trulli and Ralf Schumacher set the two fastest times of the Barcelona week when on their own, Trulli commenting that tyre pick-up compromised performance when the track was busy. New test driver Franck Montagny also appeared, while TDP young drivers Kohei Hirate and Kamui Kobayashi were given a generous three days each. Six drivers ran in total, and Olivier Panis made his farewell appearance.

FERRARI (1287 LAPS)

The Scuderia had to do without the contractually tied Kimi Raikkonen, although he appeared in the garage

briefly at Jerez. A busy Luca Badoer ran on all nine days, with Felipe Massa logging seven and Marc Gené two. Badoer was fastest on the third day at Barcelona and Massa matched that feat on the first day at Jerez, and was also second overall for that test. An engine failure on the last day at Jerez gave some cause for concern.

RED BULL RACING (1081 LAPS)

The Bridgestone newcomers ran a relatively quiet programme with the Ferrari-engined RB2. Mark Webber had his first outing at Barcelona, and ran all three days at the first Jerez test, but did not take part in the second. David Coulthard also missed the last test, where Michael Ammermuller and Tonio Liuzzi drove.

TORO ROSSO (1054 LAPS)

Minardi used Bridgestone tyres until 2005, so its successor has less adapting to do than other ex-Michelin runners. Scott Speed and Tonio Liuzzi both appeared on seven days with the obsolete V10-powered car. The American was shaken up by a big accident in the second Jerez test. Sebastian Bourdais was a surprise nomination (see p8), and helped by Speed's problem ran a full three days. He became the last driver to use a contemporary Cosworth F1 engine in anger.

SUPER AGURI (893 LAPS)

Anthony Davidson gave the team's controversial interim Honda-derived car its first run over six days Barcelona and the first Jerez test, and his position in the midfield reflected the huge step the car represents. Takuma Sato took over for the full three days of the later Jerez test.

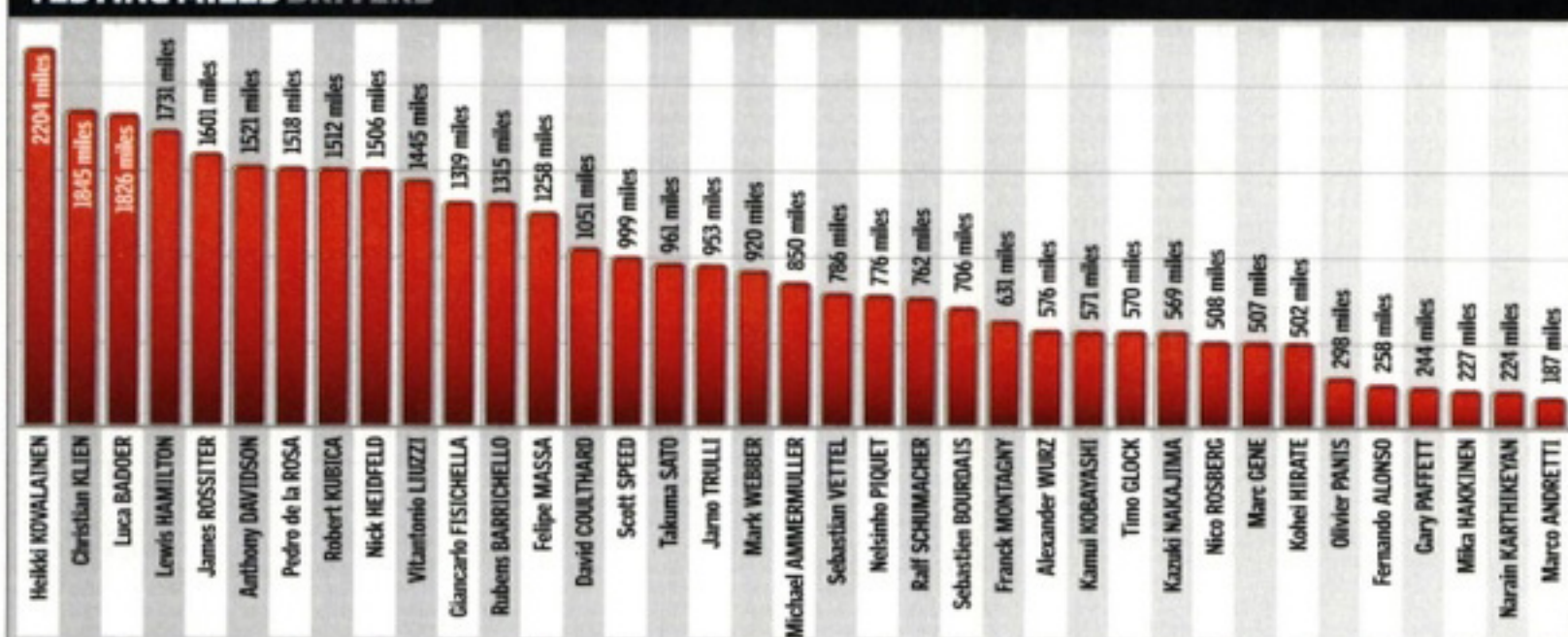
WILLIAMS (673 LAPS)

Already seen in September, the single Toyota-powered FW28B ran on all nine available days but recorded substantially less mileage overall than the lone Aguri car. Nico Rosberg appeared just for two days at the first Jerez test but was sixth overall, while Alex Wurz only ran for three days, the same as new test driver Kazuki Nakajima. Narain Karthikeyan had a day at Barcelona. The team was satisfied with its 2007 seamless-shift gearbox.

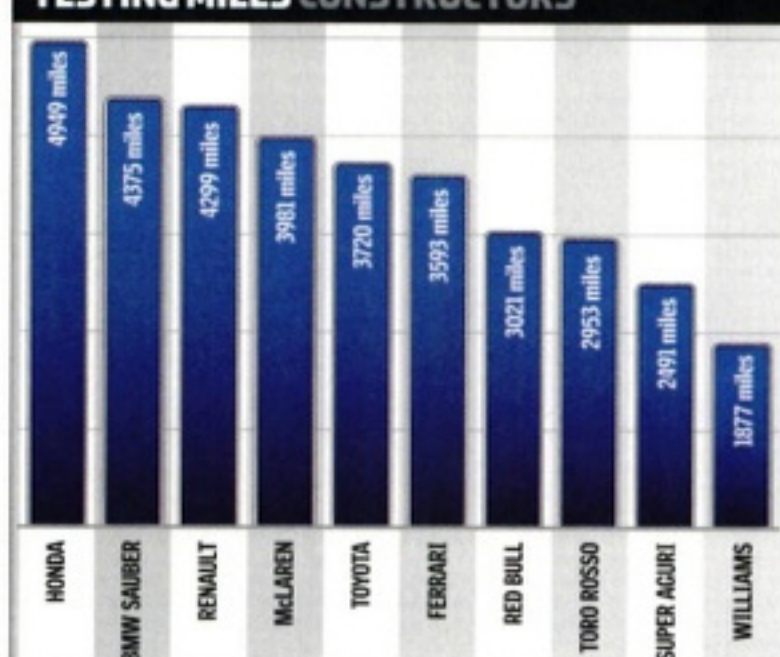
SPYKER (0 LAPS)

Between engine suppliers for the moment, Spyker chose to focus its resources on readying the definitive 2007 car. Along with Ferrari the ex-Jordan team is the longest-serving Bridgestone customer, and arguably had less to gain than most. ❧

TESTING MILES DRIVERS



TESTING MILES CONSTRUCTORS





WHO DOES THAT GUY THINK HE IS?

Looking for all the world like *Top Gear*'s 'The Stig', Fernando Alonso gets down to business on his first day behind the wheel of a McLaren F1 car. He got the same tyre allocation as team-mate Lewis Hamilton, but was slower

■ SEE MAIN STORY FOR MORE >>

DRIVERS' WINTER TEST CHAMPIONSHIP

USING THE 10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1 POINT SYSTEM FOR EACH OF THE NINE TEST DAYS (EXCLUDING TOYOTA'S EXCLUSIVE SESSIONS) THIS IS HOW A CHAMPIONSHIP WOULD LOOK

Pos	Driver	Points
1	Lewis Hamilton	48
2	Luca Badoer	42
3	Felipe Massa	38
4	Pedro de la Rosa	33
5	Heikki Kovalainen	30
6	Rubens Barrichello	26
7	James Rossiter	21
8	Christian Klien	21
9	Giancarlo Fisichella	19
10	Nick Heidfeld	15
11	Robert Kubica	11
12	Ralf Schumacher	11
13	Jarno Trulli	8
14	Fernando Alonso	6
15	Nico Rosberg	5
16	Franck Montagny	4
17	Olivier Panis	4
18	Marc Gene	3
19	Anthony Davidson	3
20	Nelson Piquet	1
21	Mark Webber	1
22	Sebastian Vettel	1

TEAMS' WINTER TEST CHAMPIONSHIP

Pos	Constructor	Points
1	McLaren	87
2	Ferrari	83
3	Honda	68
4	Renault	50
5	Toyota	27
6	BMW Sauber	27
7	Williams	5
8	Super Aguri	3
9	Red Bull Racing	1
10	Scuderia Toro Rosso	0
11	Spyker MF1	0

USING SAME POINT SYSTEM AS DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP



The sun set on Olivier Panis's F1 testing career with Toyota at Jerez

JEREZ F1 TESTING TIMES (DECEMBER 12-15)

Pos	Driver	Car	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	Pedro de la Rosa	McLaren-Mercedes MP4-21	—	1m20.125s	1m19.109s	—
2	Heikki Kovalainen	Renault R26	—	1m19.467s	1m19.824s	1m19.586s
3	Jarno Trulli	Toyota TF106B	—	1m20.244s	1m19.480s	—
4	Lewis Hamilton	McLaren-Mercedes MP4-21	—	—	1m19.589s	1m19.493s
5	James Rossiter	Honda RA106	—	1m20.016s	1m19.549s	—
6	Christian Klien	Honda RA106	—	1m20.005s	1m19.705s	1m19.835s
7	Felipe Massa	Ferrari 248	—	1m20.160s	1m19.730s	—
8	Fernando Alonso	McLaren-Mercedes MP4-21	—	—	—	1m19.750s
9	Luca Badoer	Ferrari 248	—	1m19.901s	1m19.780s	1m19.899s
10	Giancarlo Fisichella	Renault R26	—	1m20.104s	1m20.073s	1m19.798s
11	Robert Kubica	BMW-Sauber F1.06	—	—	1m20.194s	1m19.894s
12	Nick Heidfeld	BMW-Sauber F1.06	—	1m20.209s	1m19.933s	—
13	Sebastian Vettel	BMW-Sauber F1.06	—	1m20.575s	—	1m20.069s
14	Franck Montagny	Toyota TF106B	1m20.073s	1m20.493s	—	—
15	Vitantonio Liuzzi	RBR-Ferrari RB2/STR-Cos STR1	—	1m21.843s	1m21.514s	1m20.191s
16	Olivier Panis	Toyota TF106B	—	—	1m20.423s	—
17	Kazuki Nakajima	Williams-Toyota FW28B	—	1m20.859s	1m20.440s	—
18	Gary Paffett	McLaren-Mercedes MP4-21	—	1m20.541s	—	—
19	Takuma Sato	Super Aguri-Honda SAF1i	—	1m20.977s	1m20.726s	1m20.854s
20	Marc Gene	McLaren-Mercedes MP4-21	—	—	—	1m21.015s
21	Kamui Kobayashi	Toyota TF106B	1m21.214s	—	—	—
22	Sebastien Bourdais	STR-Cosworth STR1	—	1m22.521s	1m21.539s	1m21.277s
23	Alex Wurz	Williams-Toyota FW28B	—	—	—	1m21.368s
24	Michael A'muller	Red Bull-Ferrari RB2	—	1m21.371s	1m20.737s	—
25	Marco Andretti	Honda RA106	—	—	—	1m21.888s
26	Kohei Hirate	Toyota TF106B	—	—	1m22.031s	—
27	Scott Speed	STR-Cosworth STR1	—	—	1m22.455s	1m23.315s

PIT & PADDOCK

CHAMP CAR AND IRL STARS SAMPLE F1 POWER > BOURDAIS LINKED TO '08 F1 SWITCH

ANALYSIS

NEWS



Multiple Champ Car title winner Bourdais stacked up well against Scuderia Toro Rosso's current drivers at Jerez

MADE IN THE USA

Do Sebastien Bourdais and Marco Andretti need to race in F1? By DAVID MALSHER



Marco Andretti became the third generation of the great US family to sample F1 power when he tested for Honda



"IF YOU can drive, you can drive. Period," Mario Andretti is famously quoted as saying. But as each category of motorsport has become more specialised, its disciplines so particular, Andretti's statement has never before been so debatable.

One man given the chance to prove Andretti right is his own grandson Marco, who was given a test in Honda's RA106 at Jerez on December 15 as a reward for winning the Rookie of the Year title in IRL IndyCars, a series to whom the Japanese marque supplies all the engines. The other driver anxious to live up to Mario's theory is Sebastien Bourdais who drove the 2006-spec Scuderia Toro Rosso car for three days at Jerez. The Frenchman's cause has long been trumpeted by Andretti Sr too, and Bourdais himself has always hoped that Champ Car would be a stepping stone to Formula 1, rather than a final destination.

Marco Andretti definitely won't be in F1 in 2007, and it is highly unlikely that Bourdais will be either. Sebastien last week reiterated that, as far as he's concerned, he remains a Champ Car driver in 2007. For 2008 though, it is perfectly feasible that both could be on the grid for the opening round. If he proves his worth over current STR drivers Scott Speed and Vitantonio Liuzzi, Bourdais could land a berth at the team, and if the rumours regarding Rubens Barrichello retiring have any foundation, Honda may well favour the idea of putting Andretti alongside Jenson Button.

The big — *huge* — question is, could Andretti Jr and Bourdais hack it in F1? Both are seriously talented drivers, but it takes so much more than just talent to succeed in racing's top category.

Look at Robert Kubica, regarded by many F1 observers as last year's 'find'. In off-season testing, we hear he's been struggling. As a man who likes to turn into a corner hyper-aggressively, it was a style that suited the Michelins that BMW ran last year. With everyone now Bridgestone-shod, Kubica has found that the Japanese company's rubber favours drivers who do their braking in a straight line.

Kubica will get some breathing space from the judgmental because he has already proven he has talent. A rookie struggling with a similar type of nuance could find himself quickly dismissed as inconsequential.

Then there is Bourdais' and Andretti's finishing school to consider. In terms of racing, the IRL IndyCar Series is about as far removed from F1 as it's possible to be in open-wheel cars. Eleven of this year's 14 IndyCar races were held on ovals — circuits which have little or no relevance to F1. And, remember, 2006 was Andretti's first season.

In terms of equipment, Champ Cars are hugely different to F1 machinery, so Bourdais, who won his three titles using slick tyres, a turbocharged engine, a manual gearbox and steel brakes, also has a lot to learn — and unlearn.

What will Bourdais and Andretti have taken from their experience in Champ Cars and IndyCars respectively that has any bearing to F1? Working with their chief engineer for starters. And being comfortable at 200mph, as well as being mentally ahead of the car. Apart from that, nothing.

Bourdais' saving grace is that he has never sat back and been content with being the best driver in Champ Car. Knowing that he (increasingly comfortably) had the measure of his team-mate, while the Newman/Haas team would more often than not give him a mechanical, aero or strategic advantage over his closest rivals — Justin Wilson, Paul Tracy and AJ Allmendinger — it would have been easy for Bourdais to do just enough to win the title these last three years. But that just isn't him.

Maybe it's because he has always had this obsession with Formula 1, and that he feels the need to prove himself to its managers. Maybe it's just because of who he is. But almost without exception, he has tried to take every pole, win every race and notch up every fastest lap. He has this overwhelming urge to prove not only that he's the best, but how big a margin he has over the rest. As a result, he has stayed sharp.

Marco, of course, is coming from a different angle, at an earlier stage in his career. He wasn't with the best team in Star Mazda, but he didn't loiter to try to win the title. He moved on to the Indy Pro Series, and took three wins and three pole positions — all at road courses. When Dan Wheldon elected to jump from Andretti Green Racing to Ganassi last year there was an opening in IndyCars.

Andretti may not have adapted to oval racing quite as well as he'd have liked (he qualified 14th or lower five times) but he certainly didn't look out of his depth. He famously only lost the Indy 500 in the last few yards, while on road courses he was in his element: he qualified second and won at Sears Point. At Watkins Glen he qualified third and won at Sears Point. At Watkins Glen he qualified third and won at Sears Point. At Watkins Glen he qualified third and won at Sears Point.

Generally Marco doesn't get himself into too many scrapes. While his father Michael admits that driving like his fierce rival Al Unser Jr (ie: not always going flat-out) might have earned him more victories in his outstanding Champ Car career, Marco already has that patience built-in.

While Michael went into F1 as much out of curiosity as desire (and spent a lot of time kicking himself that he had relinquished the best Champ Car seat to Nigel Mansell), Marco has a real *hunger* for grand prix racing. He, like Michael, feels it is the pinnacle of the sport.

That being so, if Sebastien Bourdais and Marco Andretti want to make a serious go of it — and undoubtedly they do — then a year of F1 testing should be regarded as essential.

The 1995 Champ Car title winner Jacques Villeneuve is not regarded in the same light as Michael Schumacher and Mika Hakkinen, but was close enough in terms of ability that, with a car advantage, he could and did beat them. He had done nearly 6000 miles of testing for Williams by the time he made his debut in Melbourne in '96. On a circuit new to everyone, he went out and took pole position.

Bourdais and Andretti may have greater potential than JV. But to make the most of that talent, they have to give themselves a fighting chance. ☒

CV

■ MARCO ANDRETTI
■ BORN March 13 1987

■ 1997-2002 Karting, scooping several titles at Oakland Valley. Wins 'Stars of Tomorrow' national
■ 2003 Wins Skip Barber's Formula Dodge Eastern Championship in his first year in cars, taking eight victories. Also sets four new lap records
■ 2004 Wins three titles: Skip Barber's Formula Dodge National Championship (three wins), Southern series (11) and Formula TR (three)
■ 2005 Enters six Infiniti Pro Series races — wins three
■ 2006 Graduates to IRL IndyCars with Andretti Green Racing. Rookie of the Year with win at Sears Point and second in Indianapolis 500

CV

■ SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS
■ BORN February 28 1979

■ 1990-'93 Karting
■ 1995 Ninth in Formula Campus Championship
■ 1996 Seventh in French Formula Renault
■ 1997 Wins French Formula Renault title
■ 1998 Rookie of the Year in French F3 with five wins
■ 1999 French F3 champ
■ 2000 FIA Formula 3000 with Prost
■ 2001 Fourth in FIA F3000
■ 2002 FIA F3000 champ
■ 2003 Champ Car Rookie of the Year with three wins
■ 2004-'06 Wins three Champ Car World Series titles



Q&A

SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS



■ **Were you happy with your performance during the test?**
I was a couple of tenths behind Tonio [Liuzzi], so I was happy with that. A 1m21.2s is quite honourable — I am comfortable with what I have done. It has been interesting and I hope I get some more.

■ **Did you set any targets?**
Everything was set by the team — we never targeted one lap time. We were only allocated a certain number of tyres, so dedicated low-fuel runs were no good; the team wanted to see evolution over the three days. We did long runs — it was all planned in advance.

■ **Will we see you testing again for Toro Rosso?**
That is a good question! I did my best to impress the team, and hopefully I did. If so, then I'll get more chances. If they were not satisfied, there will be no follow up. I grabbed the opportunity and I am grateful to STR for the chance.

■ **Are you convinced you'd like to be in F1?**
Sure, it's the fastest car on the planet and a lot of fun to drive. I don't have the power to choose. If it is meant to be, it will happen.

■ **Where will you be racing in 2007 — F1 or Champ Cars?**
It is not in question, I would not do that to Newman/Haas. The option to do something else [other than Champ Car] ran out on September 15 — a long time ago! I don't see me leaving Newman/Haas so late in the season, my signature is in the books for next season. For me, it's not even worth discussing, but hopefully it happens for 2008. I understand your question, as both [STR] drivers are not confirmed, actually I wish they had been, but if they are to be replaced then it is not going to be me. Maybe I can join in 2008, but that is way too far ahead.

ANDRETTI: THE THIRD COMING

MARCO ANDRETTI lapped only a couple of seconds shy of test driver Christian Klien after his single-day F1 acclimatisation with Honda at Jerez in Spain on December 15.

The third-generation of Andretti to drive an F1 car, Marco finished the day 14th, ahead of fellow American, Toro Rosso's Scott Speed. It was his first taste of F1 — a prize for winning the 2006 IRL IndyCar Series Rookie of the Year title.

"I had a lot of fun and it's just a shame it was only one day," said Andretti. "It took me some time to get used to the brakes and the traction control but once I did that I started to lap more consistently."

Honda sporting director Gil

de Ferran added: "I think he did a good job, as good as we could have hoped for. The programme was all about getting him acclimatised to the car and you have to remember he didn't even know the circuit."

"Everything was new to him and he wasn't fazed by it at all. He seemed very mature and in full control of his faculties. Watching him out on the circuit he certainly didn't look afraid of it and he was giving it a go."

"His time [1m21.888s] was very reasonable when you consider how few laps [67 laps] he did. He had issues with his visor steaming up at first and then he had to take in all the car's systems, so it was a good first day."

"Getting used to the brakes was the biggest task. Not only did he find that the car stopped very quickly but the carbon brakes require a different sort of modulation, so he was just getting used to the stopping distances and how to deal with the actual braking."

"There may have been some time to be had there but I think it was one of those situations where if he'd just slept on it he would have woken up quite a bit quicker the next day, just in terms of getting used to it. It's hard to make any time comparisons when someone is having their first time in a car but I thought he did a good job."

There are no firm plans to give Andretti further seat time

at present. "I think he has his eyes set on getting his IRL championship firmly on track next year and so there's nothing booked," said De Ferran.

Andretti now faces a decision on whether he leaves the American scene to try to break into F1, most likely via a season in GP2.

De Ferran, who has extensive racing experience on both sides of the Atlantic, said: "I think Marco's getting very good schooling in America, racing at a very high level against some stiff competition, and that's as good a preparation as you can hope for."

"A Formula 1 car is certainly a unique and complex machine, but you have to make the step at

some stage. Lewis Hamilton, for example, has done all the preparation he can do. With Marco though, I think perhaps that it's still a little early to be speculating [about him]."

Tony Dodgins





We first revealed plans for RoC to visit the new Wembley stadium back in January 2005

WEMBLEY IN RUNNING FOR RACE OF CHAMPS

RoC organisers Johnson (far right) and Mouton (far left) conclude the deal to bring the event to Wembley for 2007

RACE OF CHAMPS OFF TO WEMBLEY

ORGANISERS OF the Race of Champions have vowed to make next year's Wembley spectacular the biggest in the event's history. The Wembley deal, the possibility of which was first revealed in Autosport (January 27, 2005), was announced at the conclusion of this year's event at the Stade de France. Although organisers have only just started to work on the details of the Wembley RoC after agreeing a one-year initial deal plus options for further events with operators of the new stadium two weeks ago, they are optimistic of a spectacular event.

Fredrik Johnson, who co-organises the RoC alongside former rally star Michele Mouton, said: "I hope this will be the biggest Race of Champions. We have got a couple of areas that we are planning to develop and now that we have finished the 2006 RoC we will start looking at the exact details of the programme. It's the 20th anniversary so we have a few surprises planned.

"It's still early days, and I'm sure that there will be strong interest from the motorsport world and even outside of motorsport business. We're turning Wembley stadium – the most famous stadium in the world – into a race track.

"That's going to attract a lot of curiosity. We've already

heard from some manufacturers keen to get involved."

Johnson is hopeful of attracting a capacity crowd for the December event, which is expected to be in the vicinity of 71,000, subject to Motor Sports Association approval. Despite the long-running worries over the readiness of the stadium, Johnson has no concerns over Wembley being ready to run.

He said: "I'm not worried at all. We were there earlier this month and we could run the RoC there tomorrow. It looks finished. There are a lot of details to be taken care of, but I've got no doubt that they will be ready in time."

The likes of David Coulthard and Colin McRae, long-time supporters of the RoC, are likely to return for 2007. World Touring Car Champion Andy Priaulx, who made his RoC debut at the Stade de France this month, is also hoping to return.

Priaulx said: "Wembley is going to be brilliant and a good chance for the British drivers to appear in front of the home crowd. Hopefully they'll invite me back because it's going to be superb."

Wembley will be the sixth venue to host the RoC. The Stade de France took over from long-time host Gran Canaria in 2004, while in its early days the event ran in Madrid, Barcelona, the Nurburgring and Montlhéry.

VERSTAPPEN IN MINARDI FRAME

JOS VERSTAPPEN could be on the verge of becoming a Champ Car driver, following Paul Stoddart's admittance that his 'old' F1 driver is a potential candidate for his 'new' Minardi Team USA outfit.

Stoddart, who before Christmas announced that he would be taking a controlling interest in the CTE Racing-HVM team and rebranding it, said: "Jos and I go back a long way and we have a good working relationship. I think he would be an asset to the series and an asset to Minardi Team USA. So yes, there are negotiations going on, but there will be no announcements this side of the New Year."

Stoddart suggested that there could be major Dutch interest in Minardi Team USA in 2007, thanks to Harry Muermans, who this year sponsored Jan Heylen at Dale Coyne Racing.

"Harry is not only a business associate but he's also a good friend, and there

will be some involvement from him. However, the exact nature of that involvement is not yet finalised."

Given that Robert Doornbos is also a Muermans-sponsored driver, there is some speculation that he too is a potential candidate for Minardi. "Robert is someone we are talking to," said Stoddart.

Where this leaves the team's 2006 drivers Nelson Philippe and Dan Clarke (below) is unclear.

Stoddart stated: "Running four cars is probably a bit too much for 2007; three is the aim. We are currently talking to four drivers including Nelson and Dan. There are others beyond that."



BRISCOE SET FOR PENSKE PORSCHE

IRLAND Champ Car racer Ryan Briscoe looks certain to drive for the Penske-run Porsche squad in the 2007 American Le Mans Series.

The Australian, who was without a full-time drive in 2006, is believed to have agreed terms to drive one of Penske Motorsport's Porsche LMP2 class RS Spyders. He would share his seat with Penske IRL driver Helio Castroneves, who would contest selected non-clashing events as Dario Franchitti is slated to do with

class rivals Andretti Green Racing. Neither Porsche nor Penske has commented on the deal, which should be announced in mid-January, but 25-year-old Briscoe was present at the Porsche Motorsport awards just before Christmas.

It has also emerged that Emmanuel Collard, who had been expected to fill the vacant prototype seat left by Lucas Luhr (see right), will now fulfil his Porsche obligations in Europe, most likely in FIA GTs for a fourth season in a row.

Collard and Patrick Long are expected to join Penske for the ALMS enduros at Sebring and Road Atlanta. Sascha Maassen, Romain Dumas and Timo Bernhard will all remain with the team.

● Collard will return to the Daytona 24 Hours with Cheever Racing at the beginning of next year. The Frenchman, who won the big race in 2005, will share the team's lead Porsche-powered Crawford DP03 with Maassen, team boss Eddie Cheever and Christian Fittipaldi.

AUDI SIGNS DUO FOR DTM AND R10

AUDI HAS confirmed Porsche refugees Lucas Luhr and Mike Rockenfeller will join its ranks for 2007 in both the DTM touring car and R10 sportscar programmes.

Luhr, 27, and Rockenfeller, 23, formed part of Porsche's American Le Mans Series line-up last season, but have defected to Audi to contest the dual programmes. In the DTM they will drive year-old A4s, most likely in place of Frank Stippler and Pierre Kaffer, but their role with the R10 is unsure as the scope of the programme is unclear.

"It is important to us that our drivers can also make a valuable contribution to the sportscar project with the Audi R10 TDI," said Audi Motorsport chief Wolfgang Ullrich. "Lucas and Mike can both do this."

"I've realised a dream by securing a factory contract with Audi," said Rockenfeller, while Luhr added: "At Audi I will finally get the chance to fight for overall victories."

DYSON IN SHOCK ALMS SWITCH TO RUN SPYDERS

DYSON RACING has made a shock return to the Porsche prototype ranks for next year's American Le Mans Series.

The most successful US sportscar team of the modern era will field a pair of LMP2 class Porsche RS Spyders in place of the AER-engined Lolas it ran in LMP1 in 2006.

The deal revives a successful tie-up between Dyson and

Porsche that yielded 12 IMSA GTP wins between 1985-'91.

Team boss Chris Dyson said: "The opportunity to work with Porsche again was extremely attractive because a great deal of our team's heritage was built with the marque. We don't see this as a step down; more a sideways switch."

Dyson maintained that his team had been promised parity

of equipment with the Penske Motorsport-run factory team.

"This is more of a collaboration and we will be provided with equal equipment," he said.

Andy Wallace, Butch Leitzinger, Guy Smith and Chris Dyson will drive the two cars.

Series organisers have targeted Creation and Zytek to fill the void left by Dyson in LMP1.

PORSCHE WINS IN BAHRAIN

KONRAD-LECHNER Motorsport won the inaugural Bahrain 24 Hours, held before Christmas.

Its Porsche 911 GT3-RSR was crewed by Franz Konrad, Wolfgang Kaufmann, Michael Schrey, Luciano da Silva and Miroslav Konopka.

The second-placed Duller Motorsport-run BMW lost its hopes of victory with an electronic throttle problem.

The JMB Racing Ferrari 360 of Brits Ben Aucott and Joe Macari and New Zealander Rob Wilson took third place.



Porsche defeated BMW and Ferrari amid the fireworks

COLCIAGO BACK ON WORLD STAGE

TIN-TOP STALWART Roberto Colciago will return full-time to the World Touring Car Championship to bolster the SEAT ranks in 2007.

The SEAT Italia squad that fielded the 38-year-old in two WTCC events in 2006 is moving up to the world series after winning this year's domestic Superturismo. The deal marks Colciago's full return to the

top flight of international touring car racing, four years on from contesting the European Touring Car Championship with the Alfa Romeo factory squad.

SEAT Sport boss Jaime Puig said: "The team won in Italy and now it wants to step forward. That is the correct way."

SEAT Italia is run by the Scuderia Girasole team.

PEUGEOT 'A MONTH BEHIND SCHEDULE'

PEUGEOT'S NEW turbo-diesel Le Mans 24 Hours challenger is a month behind schedule, Autosport has learned.

The 908 LMP1 prototype had been due to run in December, but the closed-top design will now not turn a wheel until the second week of January. Peugeot blamed late delivery of the key body components from a subcontractor for the delay.

Peugeot will launch the 908 on

January 10, when the car is expected to run in front of the world's press at a Paris proving ground. At the same time, it will reveal all six drivers.

Sportscar regulars Nicolas Minassian and Stephane Sarrazin will contest Le Mans and the five-round Le Mans Series, while Champ Car racer Sebastien Bourdais will join up for the 24 Hours.

The identity of the remaining three drivers is unclear.

NEWS IN BRIEF



EN GARDE, SUPER GIEDO

Dutchman Giedo van der Garde, who has joined the Super Aguri team as third driver for next season (above), will combine his F1 testing commitments with racing in the 2007 Renault World Series with Victory Engineering.

SUTIL SET FOR SPYKER

All-Japan Formula 3 champion Adrian Sutil was expected to be confirmed by Spyker as its second Formula 1 World Championship race driver as Autosport closed for press before Christmas. The 23-year-old German impressed the team with his performances in his third driver role this year, and beat Tiago Monteiro, Ernesto Viso and Alexandre Premat to the drive.

DAYTONA BID BY WESTBROOK

Porsche Supercup king Richard Westbrook will make his international sportscar debut in next month's Daytona 24 Hours. He will share a Synergy Motorsport Porsche 911 GT3 Cup with Patrick Huisman, Richard Lietz and Steve Johnson. Westbrook said: "It's a chance to showcase my abilities in America."

MORE ALMS FOR KELLENNERS

Ralf Kelleners is set to return to the American Le Mans Series full-time in 2007 with Rahal Racing's new sportscar division. The former Champion Audi, ACEMCO Saleen and Risi Ferrari driver is understood to have agreed to lead the team's assault on the GT2 class with a new Porsche 911 GT3-RSR.

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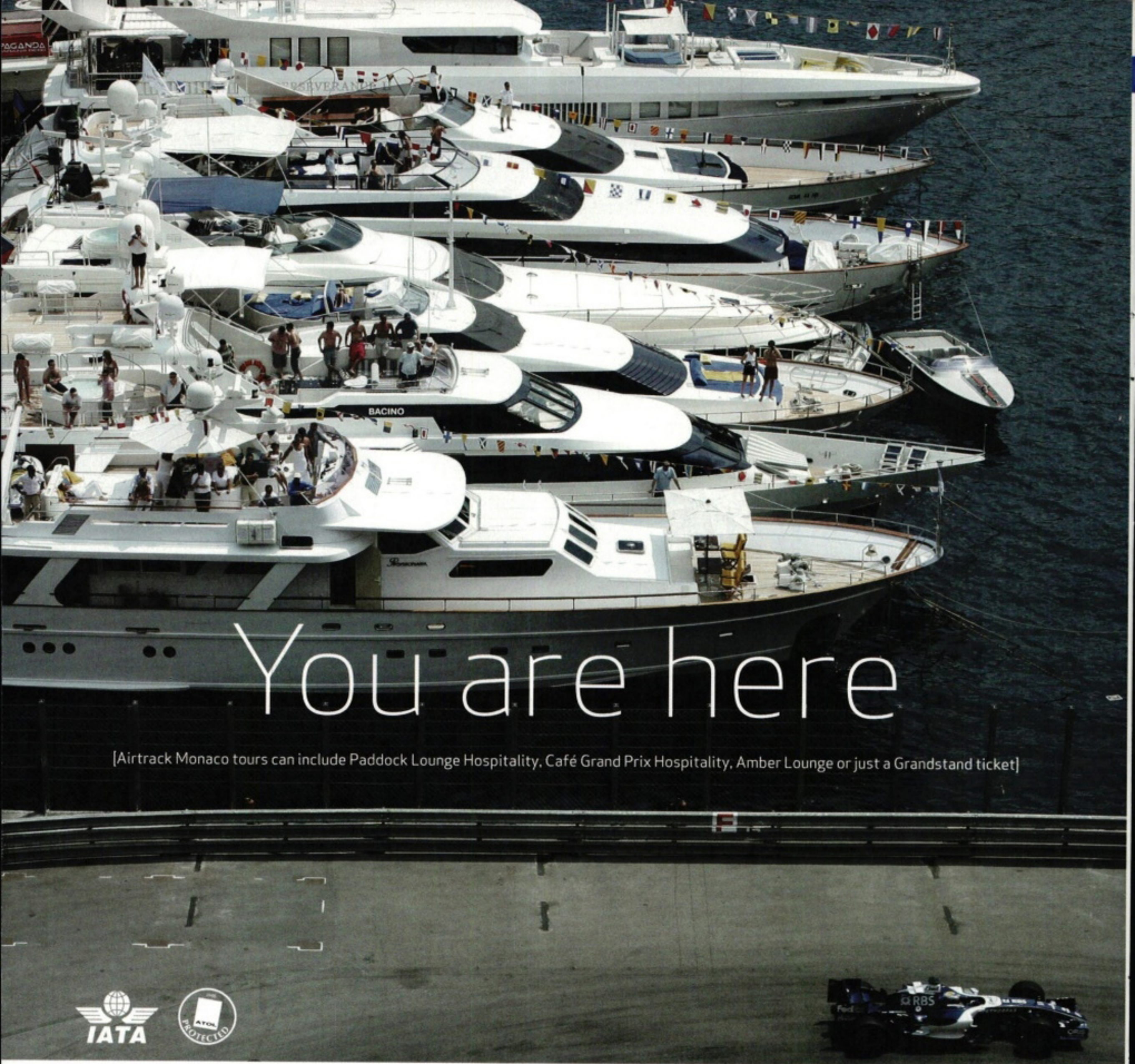
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■ Autosport International is the only motorsport exhibition where you can rub shoulders with stars past and present. Former grand prix ace Derek Warwick and John Watson will be attending, as will Johnny Herbert and star aerodynamicist Adrian Newey. Sportscar star Johnny Mowlem will also be there to meet his fans after a busy 2006 season which included outings in the Daytona, Le Mans and Spa 24 Hour races.

■ The Vauxhall British Touring Car team will unveil its Super 2000-specification Vectra Hatch at Autosport International. The switch to the Vectra, first revealed in Autosport (July 20), has been made in part owing to the superiority of the baseline aerodynamic package in comparison with the Astra Sport Hatch that Vauxhall has campaigned for the past two years.

■ Tickets are available at www.autosport-international.com or from the ticket hotline on 0870 380 2244, at £26.00 per adult including entry to the 45-minute Live Action Arena. Children (5-15 years) will be admitted for £18.50, while the elite Paddock Pass costs £32.00. There are a limited number of Paddock Passes available.

■ A limited-edition Platinum Club pass is available for £65. The special ticket offers fans access to the VIP enclosure in the Live Action Arena, complete with champagne and canapes. Free car parking and exclusive access to the Driver Signing Area is also included.



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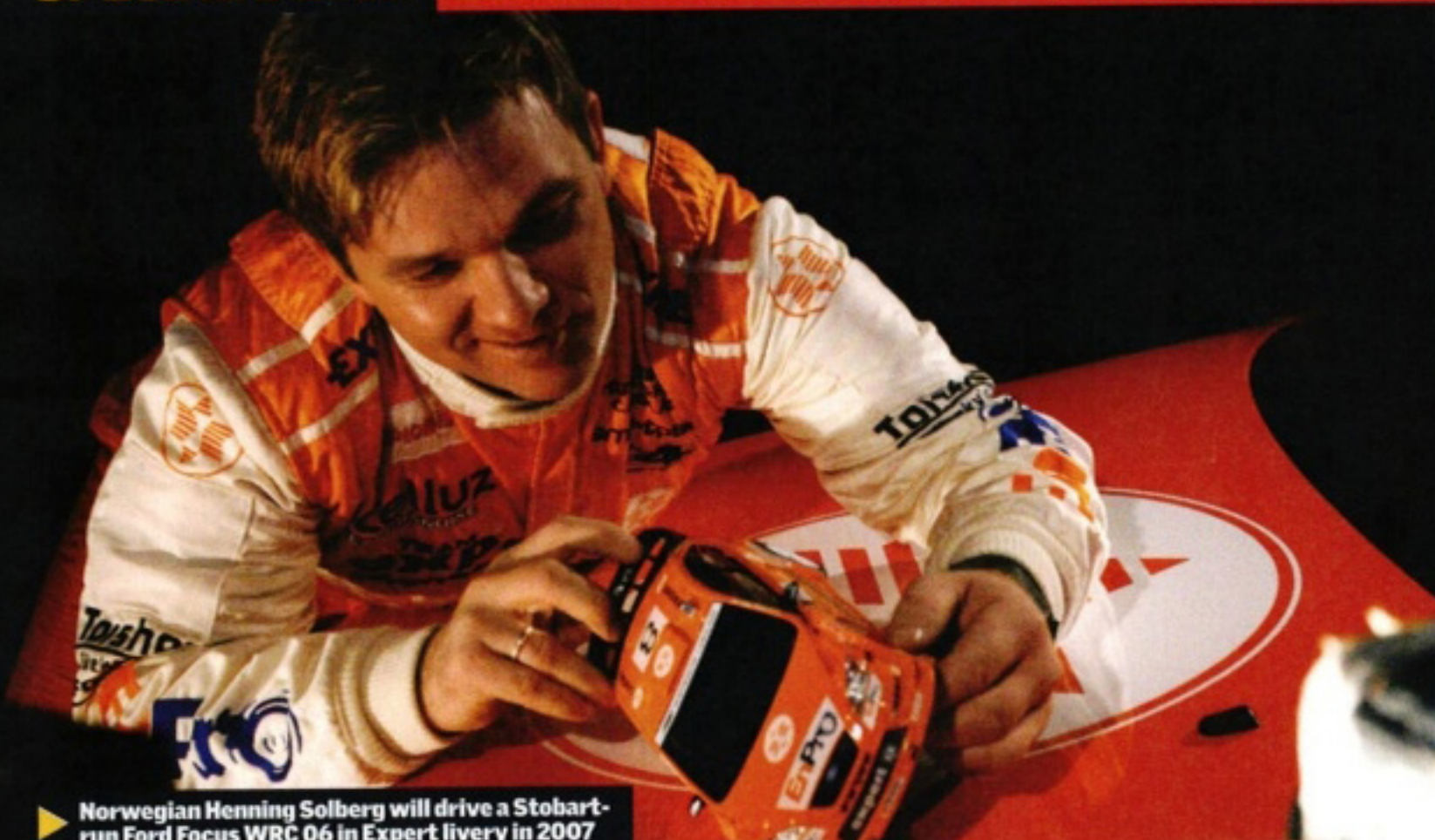
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Norwegian Henning Solberg will drive a Stobart-run Ford Focus WRC 06 in Expert livery in 2007

ENTRIES BOOST 2007 WORLD RALLY LINE-UP

THE ENTRY for the 2007 World Rally Championship has shown a significant increase in the number of frontline cars that will compete regularly during the season, with eight teams lining up for some rounds of the series.

The headline news surrounds Citroen Sport's return to the series as a Manufacturer One entry, along with Ford and Subaru. The big three aside, there will be four Manufacturer Two outfits competing, as well as Suzuki Sport on selected rounds. On rallies in which Suzuki's SX4 WRC is present, the entry list will boast upwards of 17 World Rally Cars.

Kronos Racing, the team which ran Sebastien Loeb to this year's World Rally Championship title, will run a brace of Citroen Xsara WRCS. Austrian driver Manfred Stohl returns to Kronos for all 16 rounds, having competed 10 times in a Kronos Xsara in 2005. Stohl will be joined for six rallies by former Peugeot works driver Daniel Carlsson. Carlsson's programme will begin with the Swedish Rally—an event he is aiming to win in the Citroen.

The Stobart VK Ford team's return to the WRC will comprise a three-car entry. Britain's Matthew Wilson remains, alongside Jari-Matti Latvala. They will be joined

by Henning Solberg, whose Focus RS WRC 06 will run in the orange livery of sponsor Expert. All three Stobart cars will contest the complete championship, with Latvala and Solberg nominated for points ahead of 19-year-old Wilson.

At the announcement of his two-year deal, Solberg was upbeat about the seasons to come. "This year the goal was to be on the podium in at least one event," he said. "We did that in Turkey. Next year our aim will be to visit the podium more than once. The car is the best we can get and it's good enough to win our home event: Rally Norway."

Cumbrian firm M-Sport will field a third WRC team on at least 10 rounds. The Compac Munchies Ford team (running under M2 status) will comprise Argentine privateer Luis Perez Compac on 10 rallies and his countryman Juan Pablo Raies (who is co-driven by Compac's brother Jorge Perez Compac) on six events. It is believed Gareth MacHale's 16-round programme will also run under this team's umbrella.

Finland's Toni Gardemeister will lead a UAE-financed Mitsubishi team with Khalid Al-Qassimi in a second Lancer WRC 05. The cars will run out of the Ralliart workshops in Rugby, but Mitsubishi has stressed this is a privately-funded programme and not a return of the factory team.

NEW SUPERSPECIAL FOR ARGENTINA

RALLY ARGENTINA organisers have confirmed the 2007 event will include a superspecial at the River Plate football stadium.

The cars and personnel will leave the rally's base in Cordoba

on the evening of Wednesday May 2. The cars make the 430-mile journey by road, arriving early on Thursday in time for the stage at 2200. The cars will then go back onto 15 transporters

arranged by the organisers and arrive back in Cordoba early on Friday for the start of the rally.

The route for the event itself will be similar to this year's, with the Punilla, Traslasierra and

Calamuchita valleys included. The Chateau Carreras stadium on the outskirts of Cordoba could be used—as it was last season—for a superspecial and the finish on Sunday afternoon.



GALLI BACK IN ACTION

Gigi Galli returned to a Peugeot 307 WRC for the Bettega Memorial Rallysprint earlier this month. The Italian took his second straight win in the Bologna Motorshow support event

PONS TO TAKE '07 SABBATICAL

AFTER COMPETING with number one on the doors of his Citroen Xsara WRC for the last three rounds of the season, Xavier Pons has announced he will not take part in the 2007 WRC season.

Pons, who was chosen ahead of Colin McRae to stand in for the injured Sebastien Loeb, has been unable to secure the kind of deal he wanted for the coming season. The 26-year-old finished seventh in the 2006 standings,

but collected 19 of his 32 driver points in the last four rallies of the season.

Pons said: "Despite what I showed in the last part of the season, and having some proposals on the table, none of them offered me the minimum guarantees to face a season trying for podiums. Nobody could offer us a good testing programme. To accept that was to waste all the work up to now. It is very sad, but that's life."



Pons

GROUP N SWITCH FOR TRAVIS

AMERICAN BIKE ace Travis Pastrana will contest selected Production WRC rounds next season and the full PWRC in 2008, with the aim of contesting the world championship in a World Rally Car in 2009.

He will blend next year's three-event PWRC schedule (Mexico, Argentina and GB) with a full assault on the US series in a Subaru. Pastrana said his 2008 results would determine his route for the following year.

The 23-year-old said: "Marcus Gronholm was a motocrosser, Sebastien Loeb a gymnast. There's a lot of sports that work into rallying. At my age, I'm towards the top end for motocross. In cars, 23 is still young. Stig Blomqvist was my main opposition in the US championship and he won the 1984 World Title! He's this bald guy who's been kicking my ass all year long!"

● Former Red Bull Skoda driver Andreas Aigner will contest the 2007 PWRC in a Mitsubishi.

SUBARU TRIES BFG RUBBER

SUBARU RAN on BF Goodrich rubber for the first time before Christmas, with the team happy with its initial findings.

Next month's Monte Carlo Rally will be the first time a factory Subaru Impreza WRC has started an event on anything other than Pirelli tyres. Despite limited testing, Subaru World Rally Team operations director Paul Howarth was pleased.

"Starting out with a new tyre partner is never easy," he said. "And starting in Monte Carlo—the toughest event from a tyre perspective—makes that process a little tougher. That said, we were very pleased with the results from the test. Petter [Solberg] and Chris [Atkinson] did two days each in the Alps."

Howarth added that the latest test had offered further positives after a week's running in Spain and Chateau Lastours in France, earlier in the month.

"The endurance test was really encouraging," he said. "We ran for seven days without any problems. The next big test is in Sardinia at the end of January, where we really start ramping up work on the S12B [the '07-spec Impreza]."

EVO SERIES SEVERES BRC TIES

THE MITSUBISHI Ralliart Evolution Challenge has ended its partnership with the British Rally Championship, citing "commercial" reasons.

Instead of running on every round of the BRC, as it did for the first time this year, the Challenge will return to its ANCRO series roots.

The 2007 calendar, which was ratified by regulatory body the MSA last week, includes the Ulster Rally

as the one remaining BRC event in the Challenge's line-up.

Challenge co-ordinator Simon Slade said: "We had a great 2006 season with the BRC. However, we have to provide a championship that works for our competitors and for Mitsubishi on a commercial level. Therefore we have made the decision to feature more national events in 2007."

"We are pleased to include the Ulster Rally—it fits into the calendar perfectly and provides us with our second asphalt event of the year."

The Challenge, which is based around the same Group N cars that front the BRC, struggled to gain publicity as a standalone series in 2007—something that was not an issue in ANCRO, which still allows World Rally Cars to compete.

BRC manager Mark Taylor said: "I had an inkling this was going to happen. It's a commercial decision by Mitsubishi and only they know what's best for their championship."

Other 2007 Evo Challenge rounds include Rallye Sunseeker, the Border Counties Rally, Manx National Rally, Severn Valley Rally, Swansea Bay Rally, Bulldog Rally and one other gravel round.

EVENTS

Sat 2000-0000 Motors TV
It's only a matter of weeks since the Aussie V8 Supercar championship was wrapped up in controversial fashion at Phillip Island. Well, to be precise, it was settled in a courtroom in Melbourne on the day after the race. Yes, that controversial Kelly/Lowndes incident will be one of the many grand moments you'll see in this amazing four-hour review. After thirteen rounds, including the legendary Bathurst 1000km, the protagonists went into the last race level on points. It was that tough and that tight, with a particularly close finish at Mount Panorama. Relive all those close moments again on Saturday evening.

Sun 1125-1225 *ITV1*
If you're without satellite television or simply an F1 fan then you'll be having some pretty severe symptoms by now, the heart of the off-season. So you wouldn't want to miss a precious hour of F1 review action on ITV. It was a classic season that went right down to the wire, and that Bahrain opener back in March might be a distant memory by now. It was, of course, a great Schumacher versus Alonso battle that set the tone for the rest of the season. This is your chance to relive the whole story, as well as its fascinating off-track subplots such as Schuey's retirement and Kimi Raikkonen signing for Ferrari.



TV/RADIO

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	TERRESTRIAL&RADIO	MOTORS TV	SKY SPORTS	OTHER SATELLITE
THURS DEC 28		0100-0300 ALMS Review 0300-0500 Super GT Review 0500-0700 SEAT Cupra Review 0700-1000 British F3 Review 1800-1930 Andros Trophy 2000-2200 V8 Supercars 2200-0000 FIA GT Review	1900-2000 Race World (SS3)	
FRI DEC 29		0000-0130 Andros Trophy 0300-0500 Super GT Review (below right) 0500-0700 NASCAR Busch Review 0800-0930 Andros Trophy 1300-1700 Champ Car Review 1700-2100 NASCAR Busch Review 2100-2200 Race & Rally UK 2200-2330 Andros Trophy (left)	0000-0100 Race World (SS3) 0230-0330 Race World (SS3) 1000-1100 Race World (SSX) 1530-1630 Race World (SS2)	
SAT DEC 30		0300-0430 Andros Trophy 0500-0700 NASCAR Busch Review 0700-0730 BMW in F1 2006 1030-1230 FIA GT Review 1400-1500 Race & Rally UK 1500-1600 Britcar 24 Hours 1800-1930 Andros Trophy 2000-0000 V8 Supercars Review	0600-0700 Race World (SSX) 0900-1000 Maxpower (SS2)	
SUN DEC 31	1125-1225 F1 Season Review (below) (ITV1)	0100-0200 Britcar 24 Hours 0300-0700 V8 Supercars 1100-1500 V8 Supercars 1500-1630 Andros Trophy 1800-1900 Britcar 24 Hours 2000-2100 V8 Supercars	0300-0400 Maxpower (SS3) 0500-0600 Maxpower (SS2)	
MON JAN 1		0300-0500 FIA GT Review 0700-1000 V8 Supercars 1900-2030 Andros Trophy 2200-2300 Race & Rally UK 2300-0000 Britcar 24 Hours	0930-1200 World Motor Sport (SSX)	
TUES JAN 2		0300-0500 NASCAR Busch Review 0500-0700 V8 Supercars Review 0800-1000 V8 Supercars Review 1300-1500 NASCAR Busch Review 1500-1800 V8 Supercars Review 2100-0200 V8 Supercars Review	1230-1330 Maxpower (SSX) 1330-1600 World Motor Sport (SSX)	
WED JAN 3		0300-0500 NASCAR Busch Review 0500-0700 V8 Supercars Review (right) 1300-1500 NASCAR Busch Review 1500-1600 Britcar 24 Hours 1600-1800 V8 Supercars Review 2230-2300 Sebastien Bourdais Feature		

NEXT WEEK

FORMULA 1 CARS THAT NEVER RACED

A LOOK AT THE WEIRD AND WONDERFUL CARS THAT FAILED TO MAKE THE GRID

MARK WEBBER

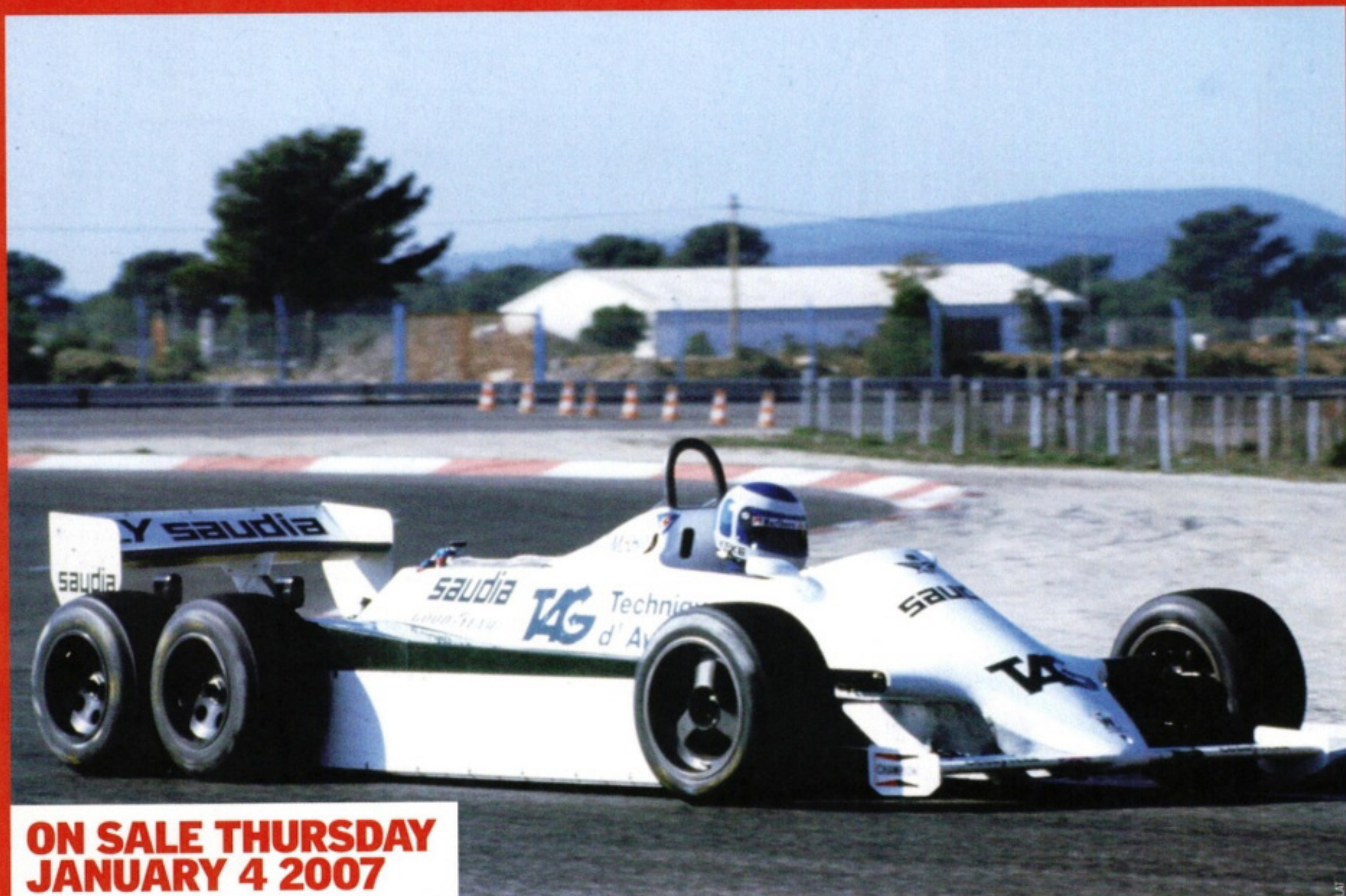
RED BULL STAR TALKS TO
MARK HUGHES ABOUT WHY
2007 IS THE MOST CRUCIAL
YEAR OF HIS CAREER SO FAR

TAKUMA SATO

HOW A SEASON AT
SUPER AGURI SAVED THE
REPUTATION OF JAPAN'S
TOP FORMULA 1 DRIVER

AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL

PART ONE OF OUR ESSENTIAL
GUIDE TO 2007'S MUST-SEE
RACING CAR SHOW HELD AT THE
BIRMINGHAM NEC IN JANUARY



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JANUARY 4 2007**

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YOU SAY

"I cheered Clay to victory at Silverstone"

LETTER OF THE WEEK GOODBYE CLAY

EVER SINCE I started following Formula 1 in 1975, I have loathed Ferrari with a passion – this puts me in a minority, I know. The way it bends the rules to get its own way; think about Monza in '76, for example.

However, I have always had a soft spot for Clay Regazzoni. He crashed in front of me in the rain at Silverstone in 1975 (hooray, he was in a Ferrari), and I am proud to say I cheered him to victory at the same track in '79 for Williams. Goodbye, Clay, I shall miss you.

Simon Hird
via email

SURTEES SPEAKS

I have noted with interest correspondence on the subject of the British Touring Car Championship not visiting Silverstone in 2007. Of course this is not the full story and it should be remembered that the two junior formulas, which is where stars of the future will develop from (namely Formula BMW and Renault), will now also be denied the opportunity of racing at Silverstone.

I am a Vice-President of the BRDC, and previously as a Director fought hard to have the BRDC support the concept of giving youngsters the opportunity from karting to cars by the support for the Stars of Tomorrow karting series and assisted drives in single seaters as prizes. This in my opinion was not only vital for the development of new champions, but also, when looking at the average age of a BRDC member, of introducing the home of the Grand Prix and the BRDC to youngsters at an early stage in their career. This year the BRDC withdrew from the karting to cars programme. Junior formula drivers will now, with the loss of their races in the BTCC Series, have no reason to test at Silverstone or become acquainted with the home of the BRDC.

Silverstone, although not having the finest circuits in this country, is the home of the British Grand Prix, and as such should be the hub of British motorsport. I do not know the circumstances as to why negotiations broke down, but it frankly shouldn't have happened.

John Surtees
Edenbridge, Kent

SHARING CARING

When will Colin Kolles realise that the true supporters of F1 would rather see close racing, with all cars circulating well within 10 per cent of the leading car, than watch the slowest cars/poorest teams trailing round many seconds behind the leading teams. If this has to be achieved through close co-operation between loosely joined teams, so be it. The fact that he may have just got his hands on a decent budget must be put to one side.

If he finds this unacceptable, then a well paid job in private

"THIRD PLACE IS PROBABLY SEBASTIEN LOEB'S LOWEST RESULT OF THE YEAR"

LAWRENCE CRAWFORD

dentistry in the UK with no competition may be a good less stressful alternative.

Neil McCulloch
via email

LOW LOEBER

It struck me while reading your Top 50 drivers (December 14/21) that third place probably qualifies as Sebastien Loeb's lowest result of the year...

Lawrence Crawford
via email

PASTRANA SANDWICH

Why no Travis Pastrana in your Top 50 drivers? Since you love Valentino Rossi so much, you should recognise the achievement of someone who's successfully raced on four wheels (US rallying) as well as two.

Charles Lucas
via email

SOUND BITES

I think Fernando Alonso is over-rated. A megastar really ought to monster his co-driver – like Schumacher did to Massa this year, as Tony Dodgins made clear (December 14/21).

Thomas Fairfax
via email

Andy Priaulx should have been in your top 10 or even in the top 5. To have achieved what he did in spite of the ludicrous weight penalty system deserves more recognition.

William Baillie
Long Marston

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BAMBER'S VIEW



TOP 50 DRIVERS 2006



FROM THE FORUM

What you thought of our Top 50 drivers of 2006...

First thing that springs to mind: Massa, two wins, third in the championship, ranked 14th behind Heidfeld, Trulli, Webber, Fisichella, Button... Should be a little bit near the top, don't you think?
Cfiores

No. He had a car that was guaranteed to give him a win or two. The only one I'd put behind him is Fisi, possibly. I think his position is very fair.
Lifew12

Where's Edd?
Ross Stonefeld

Why are Trulli and Webber that high?
Clampett

Whenever Trulli was on course for a great result the car broke down (Monaco, Magny-Cours, Brazil). Same thing could be said about Webber (Australia, Hockenheim, Monte Carlo). It is not unreasonable.
Magicalonso

I would have to put Mikko Hirvonen in the top 20! Can't believe he's not mentioned. Also, I would put Michael top of the list for going out with such a gritty performance.
Liverpoolfc

The real top three is: 1. Alonso; 1. Loeb; 1. Prialux. Everyone else failed.
Calorus

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WE SAY

"There are none of the tiresome gaps that punctuate some events"

EDD STRAW – DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR



THE LETHARGIC, expensive and politically rancorous progress of the new Wembley Stadium may have been something of a laughing stock over the past few years, but North London's biggest building site has a shot at redemption through the annual motorsport extravaganza that is the Race of Champions.

For much of its life, the Race of Champions (RoC), has been a somewhat distant affair for British fans. When it relocated from its longtime home of Grand Canaria to the Stade de France in 2004 it moved to within a train's ride of these shores, but there is no excuse for British fans to miss next year's Wembley RoC.

In Paris for the past three years it has been something of a celebration of all things French. Renault, Citroen and Sebastien Loeb and Bourdais have been the star turns, so much so that when Mattias Ekstrom beat Loeb at this year's event there was barely even polite applause. Merely stunned silence. It gets the fans really involved.

The Wembley event will not be unique – the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff has beaten them to it on this year's Rally GB – but it will be on a whole different scale. Race drivers have been phased in alongside the rally drivers that have traditionally populated the event, giving it true crossover appeal. In 2006 there were representatives from the worlds of Formula 1, World Rallying, Champ Cars, Rally Raids, World Touring Cars, DTM and British Touring Cars on display. To put it bluntly, if you're reading this magazine there is certain to be something to your taste there.

The organisers have already spoken about some big plans for the 20th anniversary event. This year, the British team split into two for an Autosport

England versus F1 Racing Scotland. The home international tournament may have long died out in football, but how about a Welsh, Northern Irish and maybe even Irish team to capitalise on old rivalries and really get the crowd revved up?

The event also has a proud history of attracting some of the top names in the sport. Michael Schumacher competed a couple of years ago (when he was famously beaten by eventual winner Heikki Kovalainen) so in terms of home heroes surely no-one is out of the question. Jenson Button would have competed this year, but for his injury, and how about bringing in someone such as Lewis Hamilton, hopefully off the back of a spectacular debut F1 season, alongside WTCC champion Andy Priaulx?

The RoC is, above all, a crowd event. The drivers love the atmosphere and the chance to compete for bragging rights in an environment where the only pressure is that which they put on themselves. It allows the fans to see race cars in a completely different environment. Granted, the speeds are hardly earth-shattering and in the grand scheme of things there is little more than a bit of individual and national pride to fight for.

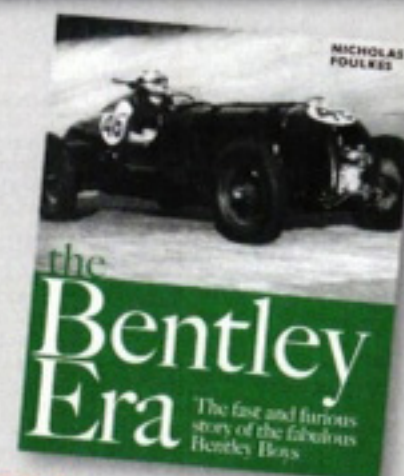
The format, too, should be irresistible. Since the whole competition is run over six hours with on-track activity all the time, there are none of the tiresome gaps that punctuate some race meetings in this country. In fact, the main danger is over-stimulation!

With a crowd of around 70,000 the target, there's every chance that the Race of Champions could become one of the big events of the motorsport calendar alongside the likes of the British Grand Prix, the Goodwoods and Rally GB. December may traditionally be something of a month off, at least in circuit racing circles, but in 2007 British motorsport could give itself, and the beleaguered new stadium, a wonderful boost.



Wembley (if it's finished on time) could be home to a scene like this in 2007

ARMCHAIR ENTHUSIAST



BOOK

THE BENTLEY ERA: THE FAST AND FURIOUS STORY OF THE FABULOUS BENTLEY BOYS

By Nicholas Foulkes
Published by Quadrille, £25
ISBN: 1 84400 241 1

Towards the end of this excellent book, Nicholas Foulkes writes: "It is a fair assumption to say that for all of the Bentley Boys the 1920s were the happiest days of their lives... even if they didn't know it at the time." Surely true – and the author has captured the heady days of the Roaring Twenties quite beautifully in one of the most fascinating and entertaining motor racing books I've read.

What a time it must have been – if you had the money and position enjoyed by this group of raffish men. They had survived the horrors of the Great War, and ahead of them lay the Wall Street crash, the Depression and the dark rise of fascism. But this was the summer of their lives – and they made the most of the sunshine while it lasted.

The Bentley Boys, a moniker disliked by the chaps themselves, lived fast in every way. One of them, the truly heroic Glen Kidston, summed up their ethos perfectly: "Life, I imagine, is given to man or woman – more particularly man [less enlightened times, female readers!] – to do something with. Mere existence to me is just wasting one's life. Because one has means is, to my way of thinking, a greater reason why one should strive to do something."

What they did was put British Racing Green on the motorsport map, winning the Le Mans 24 Hours five times between 1923 and '30. But this book is not centred on rehashed race reports, and does not offer a technical breakdown of Bentley cars. It is a human story, starting with WO's founding of his beloved company in '19 and ending with the marque's withdrawal from racing in '30.

These ebullient characters – WO, Woolf Barnato (rich, playboy shareholder from 1926 and ace driver), Dr Benjafield, Henry 'Tim' Birkin, *The Autocar* writer and racer 'Sammy' Davis, Kidston and others – are crafted with affection, humour and respect by Foulkes in tight prose, presented in short, sharp chapters. These qualities make the book accessible, as does the superb format. The great story is accompanied by simply wonderful photographs.

If you don't know much about this era, read this book. You'll love it.
DS

NIXON AND NORDSTROM CLAIM CHAMPIONSHIPS AT DONINGTON

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MINI Challenge and Total Track would also like to extend our thanks to every one of our 49 drivers and their teams for a fantastic championship season and for making the MINI Challenge such a special series. Special thanks to BARC and Dunlop for their support.

Thanks to: Gareth Nixon, Freddie Nordstrom, Arthur Forster, Eric Bailey, Martin Depper, Carl Bradley, Gary Kounnis, Jenny Ryan, Edward Lovett, Jonathan Shepherd, Tim Crighton, Finlay Crocker, David Shepherd, Gavin Bristow, Andrew Bailey, Rob Austin, Graham Parsons, Allen Jackson, Keith Issatt, Alan Taylor, Mike Jones, Rachel Owen, Dave Phillips, Nathan Coulter, Bill Philp, Charles Bloom, Alex Fergusson, Andrew Cox, James Olden, John Bates, Jack Stanford, Nick Rochez, Amanda Elliott, Gary Robertshaw, Mark Drury, Fiona Leggate, Ray McDowall, Ciaran Butler, Tony Skelton, Waylen Hunsucker, Dawn Boyd, Stuart Lines, Anthony Scragg, Simon Baker, Jake Packun, Ian Mills, Angus Duke, Terry Britchford and the teams: Forster Motorsport, Advent Motorsport, Mark Fish Motorsport, IF Motorsport, Robertshaw Racing, Dave Griffiths Racing, Amery Motorsport & Carrera Motorsport.

For more information on the MINI Challenge, it's competitors and this years season visit www.minichallenge.co.uk

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FIFTH COLUMN

NIGEL ROEBUCK

"CLAY WAS SURROUNDED BY PRETTY GIRLS, ALL OF THEM GAZING AT THIS GLAMOROUS STAR IN THEIR MIDST"



THIRTY YEARS ago, Autosport's offices were located in Regent Street, at the Eros end, and one icy morning, in February 1977, I walked the short distance to a ritzy shop in Bond Street, to interview a grand prix driver.

The Etienne Aigner company, which manufactures high-quality leather goods, was at the time a personal sponsor of Clay Regazzoni.

The interview had been fixed the way these things always were back then: I called Regazzoni at his home in Lugano and he said he would soon be in London to visit the Aigner shop. When he knew the date, he would call me. He did.

When I walked in, Clay had already arrived, and was surrounded by pretty girls who worked in the shop, all of them gazing at this glamorous star in their midst. When he saw me and smilingly came over to shake hands, I suddenly became important, too. Heady stuff...

We ended up doing the tape in the stock room, which reeked of leather and money. A couple of chairs were brought in, then a couple of coffees. We talked through the morning, and it was about the most relaxed interview I can remember.

The day after Regazzoni's death, I read again through the article that I'd subsequently written, even played back a few minutes of the tape. How spoiled we were in those days, when PR had yet to invade Formula 1, and racing drivers simply said what they thought, without fear of retribution.

An example. After six years with Ferrari, Regazzoni had recently been replaced by Carlos Reutemann, and was a little aggrieved at the way it had been done. Enzo Ferrari, he said, had assured him he would remain as Niki Lauda's team-mate in 1977; that being so, he had turned down offers from McLaren and Brabham. Very late in the day, he discovered Reutemann was in place.

"Niki always wanted me to stay. He called me after Monza, and said, 'Look, be careful, because [Luca di] Montezemolo [then the team manager] is pushing for Reutemann because of pressure from Fiat in South America'. You have to understand that Ferrari is very political in that way, okay? The Commendatore runs the team — but Fiat pays the bills..."

"At Monza I'd spoken to Bernie [Ecclestone]. He wanted me to drive for his [Brabham] team, and made me a good offer — but I thought I was staying with Ferrari. After the last race, in Japan, I flew to England to see him again — but by now of course he knew I didn't have another drive with a big team. He said, 'I want you to drive, but in this moment I have not a lot of money for you, because I pay a lot for [Carlos] Pace'. I said, 'Okay, forget it. For me it's important to race, because I love it. The money is not so important — I like to go racing with nice people...'"

That being so, Clay had signed with Ensign, where money *couldn't* be important, because there wasn't any, but Mo Nunn and his little team produced a surprisingly competitive car, and they were indeed 'nice people'.

As far as income was concerned, Regazzoni shrugged, he would make do with his personal sponsors, such as Etienne Aigner.

"I'm also going to race at Indianapolis," he said. "I've always wanted to do the Indy 500..."

In a McLaren, Regazzoni would start the race from 29th, get up to eighth within 10 laps, and then retire with an oil leak.

"Yep, that was Clay," said a sorrowful Mario Andretti, whom I called upon hearing the news from Italy.

"He was flat out always, wasn't he? The racer's racer. And you know what, I don't think he had an enemy in the world. He was one of those rare individuals who it was always a pleasure to be with. I struck an immediate friendship with him the first time I met him... that was just the way he was. There are some people in our sport who will never be replaced — *never* — and he's one of them, a character you can talk about for the rest of your life."

I reminded Andretti of a tale he had told me long ago about Monza in 1972, where he joined Regazzoni and Jacky Ickx in the Ferrari team. It was lunch on Saturday, an hour or so before qualifying, and he had been... surprised to find Clay enjoying a glass of red wine with his pasta.

"Yeah, that's right!" Mario laughed. "That was Clay, and [Vittorio] Brambilla was the same — and they were inevitably quicker right afterwards! Jeez, imagine that now... you'd be excommunicated!"

At the Italian Grand Prix the previous year Regazzoni had qualified only eighth, but in those days 'jumped starts' were commonplace, and anyway a Ferrari driver at Monza could get away with anything. Clay, I'm sure, was in at least second gear by the time the flag dropped, and led by about 50 yards as the pack headed off towards the Curva Grande...

Andretti giggled at the memory of it all. "It reminds me of three or four years ago when we were at Homestead, and they had a kart race. It was like a 45-minute race and there were two drivers in each team — you each did a stint. Clay and I teamed up, but obviously he had to have his own kart, fitted with hand controls, so the understanding was that we would have a 10-second penalty at changeover time, because we weren't actually switching drivers — we were switching karts. So he was supposed to wait 10 seconds before he left — but of course as soon as I pulled in, off he went! And of course we won the race!"

"Some guys like [Arturo] Merzario were belly-aching away about it — and Clay, of course, thought that was hilarious! Boy, there was a guy who knew how to have fun."

"I was just thinking a second ago," Andretti continued, "here we are, talking... it's a terrible, tragic day, and here we are, reminiscing, smiling at all the stories about this man. Says everything, doesn't it? That's what it's all about — that's how he'll be remembered. We should raise a glass to him tonight..."

Following his accident at Long Beach in 1980, Regazzoni was paralysed from the waist down, but a few years later he began coming to grands prix again, as a TV commentator. During practice at Monaco I saw him in Casino Square, *standing*, albeit leaning against the guardrail. Later I told him how moved I had been, and that great bandit smile spread across his face.

"For a long time," he said, "I felt very sorry for myself, but when something like this happens you move into a world you never thought about before — and you feel ashamed. I remember Gunnar Nilsson talking about the children in his cancer hospital, how he'd had years of good life they would never have. I can't walk — but I can drive my Ferrari Daytona, I have my driving school for handicapped people, I can still go to races, be part of them. I don't feel desperate any more."

That morning in Bond Street, all those years ago, I had talked to Regazzoni about the dangers of a sport so much more perilous than now. "I am a fatalist," he shrugged. "I believe everything is decided for us."

Through the hours following his death, I had a lot of e-mails from folk distressed by the news, and none was simpler, nor more poignant, than the one from Vic Elford: "Clay was always fun to race with, and fun to be with away from the track. He was such a *nice* man."

That he was. *Salute*, Gianclaudio. ☑

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F1'S INSIDE LINE

MARK HUGHES



"WE HAVE TO ACCEPT THAT ROAD CARS ARE CLEVERER THAN FORMULA 1 CARS – DELIBERATELY SO"



NEXT YEAR F1 gets an even greater standardisation of engines than it has had already and standard-issue tyres for everyone. That should close up the pack, given that it shuts down two key areas of competitive advantage.

It will leave the primary determinants of performance as aerodynamics and the driver. Of these two factors aerodynamics will be much the dominant one, given that the drivers are all to a certain minimum standard of performance. The lap time difference between the fastest and slowest driver on an F1 grid in equal cars would be, what, 1.5 seconds? If that. The lap time difference between the best and worst aero package could be 4sec.

So if you put the slowest driver in the fastest car and the fastest driver in the slowest car, the slow driver would be 2.5sec per lap faster than the fast driver. Over a race distance, he'd beat him by over a lap.

Of course the fast drivers tend not to end up in the slow cars, and vice-versa. But it does illustrate how even in the simplified era of F1 2007 the cars rather than the drivers are still going to be by far the dominant factor.

For 2008 – or maybe '09 – we are due to see standardised ECUs. This is a move towards rebalancing the equation in that it will remove traction control. The quality of the software would no longer aid the driver's exit speed from a corner. He would have to do that with his right foot. It would help, but its effect on the relative importance of car/driver would be small. Aerodynamics would still be the dominant factor.

To really grasp the nettle, you'd need to control aerodynamics much more tightly even than the current rules do. Max Mosley has spoken about formulating rules that effectively outlaw downforce and which reward only drag reduction, thereby giving the science more relevance to road cars and a reduction in energy consumption. If he ever succeeded in doing that, suddenly we would have a drivers' formula. And then the banning of traction control would be a crucially important one.

So for the past five years or so the future direction the FIA has been trying to take the sport has been increasing the importance of the driver's performance and reducing that of the car's. Then all of a sudden, at an apparently innocuous presentation in Munich in partnership with a car manufacturer a few weeks ago, Max stands like a nodding dog as the manufacturer explains how in the future it would like to see a closer match between road cars and F1 in terms of the electronic technology used for chassis dynamics! Not only did Max not

contradict Professor Goeschel, he actually backed up what he was saying.

What on earth could be happening here? If stability control is ever introduced to F1 – it is currently effectively banned by the restriction on sensors and the ban on electronic power steering – the contribution of driver skill to a lap time will be virtually wiped clean. It would be the most car-dominant formula of all time by a massive margin. Even without downforce.

Stability control, especially if it is matched to traction control, will in effect deliver the driver from the end of one straight to the beginning of the next in the fastest possible time. It will have nothing to do with him.

This point needs to be made and remade. Goeschel's vision takes what is currently compromising the essence of the sport and amplifies it until it completely kills that essence, makes it a different exercise entirely. Currently, even among all the business and politics of it all, we console ourselves that F1 is still a sport between the green light and the chequered flag. With this, it wouldn't be. It would be nothing more than a technology exercise.

The manufacturers have tied themselves up in a knot over the fact that road car technology is outstripping F1 when one of the prime reasons they're in F1 is to convince car buyers of the link between the sport's technology and the car in the showroom. Forget it. We have to accept that road cars are cleverer than F1 cars – deliberately so. We have to sell the idea that all the electronic safety nets of a road car have been deliberately removed from the F1 car in order to test the skill of the drivers. If that's a message the manufacturers cannot live with, they shouldn't be welcome in the sport.

Why the apparent turnaround in the FIA's objectives towards F1? We can only assume it's because the manufacturers have a powerful hold over the governing body. Whether that is the access to the manufacturers' research and development programmes for the green technologies F1 is going to need in future, or because of financial circumstances we can only guess at for the time being. But something drastic has happened.

At a time of falling TV audiences, this is a potentially disastrous direction for F1 to be headed. F1 fans who deplore the prospect of electronic stability control need to get that message across to the manufacturers in no uncertain terms before it's too late. The first time we have a grand prix with a stability controlled car in the field, we need a mass switch-off. ☒

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Can Kimi cut it at Ferrari?

Sure, he has the driving talent, but is that enough? Autosport investigates

The waiting is almost over. In less than a week from now, Kimi Raikkonen will turn his first laps in a Ferrari Formula 1 car.

This could be a seminal moment. The meeting of the man regarded by some as *the* fastest driver on the grid with F1's most successful and iconic team, not to mention the quickest car should Ferrari's form in the Brazilian Grand Prix be carried forward into 2007.

Since bursting onto the scene as a virtually unknown Formula Renault driver in 2001, Raikkonen rapidly emerged as one of the great talents in F1. When McLaren needed a successor to the retiring Mika Hakkinen, it turned to his fellow Finn. Then just 21 and similarly taciturn – monosyllabic, even – in his dealings with the media attention. But massively quick – as a season unravelling Nick Heidfeld's reputation at Sauber had demonstrated.

Back in 2002, McLaren was the place to be, well almost... With Hakkinen it had claimed back to back titles in 1998/'99 and taken the fight with Michael Schumacher and Ferrari down to the wire in 2000. Its fortunes had waned in 2001, but by now Hakkinen was losing the heart for the battle, although of course there were times, such as at Silverstone that year, where he was very much still up for it.

But with a hungry and equally rapid Finn in Mika's place, McLaren seemed well-placed to mount a fightback. Then Ferrari produced the F2002 and Schuey blew everyone away.

Kimi took his first podium on his McLaren debut in Australia. He set fastest lap as he battled for second with Juan Pablo Montoya, eventually losing the spot when he ran wide while trying to keep the Williams at bay. There were three other podiums that year, but no wins, although he came

tantalising close at Magny-Cours, where after inheriting the lead when Schumacher picked up a stop-go for crossing the white line on the pitlane exit, he half-spun on oil left by Allan McNish's expired Toyota V10 with victory in sight.

Things started promisingly in 2003, with a dominant performance in Malaysia rewarded by his first GP win. This coupled with third in Australia gave Raikkonen the early season championship lead, and he would remain in contention for the crown until the season end.

However, it was a charge of stealth rather than speed. In reacting to Ferrari's 2002 walkover, McLaren pushed the technological boat out for 2003's MP4-18. But the highly sophisticated aerodynamics of the car were never made to work reliably, and while the team toiled with the car on the test tracks, Raikkonen's title charge came behind the wheel of an updated version of the 2002 car, the MP4-17D.

It may have lacked outright pace, witness just two pole positions and only three fastest laps (all scored early in the season), but the car and its Mercedes engine were reliable and Raikkonen suffered just one mechanically-induced retirement all season.

In stark contrast, 2004 was a reliability disaster and Kimi failed to finish five times in the first seven races. Worse still, the MP4-19 was clearly not on the par with Ferrari's F2004 even when it was running. A huge development programme brought the 19B online in time for the French GP and this proved to be a big step forward.

Kimi put the car on pole for the British GP next time out. But Michael Schumacher again ran away with the race, although a late safety car period following Jarno Trulli's huge shunt at Bridge gave McLaren a late shot at victory.

Reliability issues continued to blight his campaign but it

all came together at Spa where he came home for his second GP win in probably the most entertaining race of the season. The race also demonstrated Kimi's bravery and racecraft (with great moves on Schumacher and Coulthard) and the art of gamesmanship as he deliberately held up Schuey behind the safety car to the detriment of the Ferrari's tyres.

But that was it for 2004. For 2005 McLaren finally gave Kimi a car worthy of his ability, and when it didn't break he was usually the fastest driver in the field. Seven wins gave him a chance of the title, but Fernando Alonso's bullet-proof reliability proved more than a match for McLaren's superior mid- to late-season pace.

It should have been the prelude for a rematch this year, but (yet) another change to the tyres regulations played against McLaren's chassis philosophy, and Kimi was little more than a bit-part player to the Schumacher/Alonso main act.

So after five seasons, 88 races, nine wins, 11 poles and 336 points, the Raikkonen-McLaren era is over.

During that spell he clearly demonstrated the speed of an F1 great, but failed to answer many other questions. How much of McLaren's bouts of reliability problems during that time were down to his aggressive driving style? And what of his abilities as a test driver: when the team needed to drag 100 per cent of the potential from the 17D, was Kimi able to provide them with the answers to all those questions? And, of course there is his James Hunt approach to social life. Drunken shenanigans with dolphins or in clubs or on boats may mark him out as the sort of bloke we'd like on an Autosport night out, but they don't give the impression of a highly dedicated athlete. The sum of all of these will answer the bigger question, can Kimi cut it at Ferrari?

We put that question to a panel of F1 luminaries.





FELIPE MASSA

FUTURE TEAM-MATE

"IT'S A big challenge for me. He's definitely a very, very good driver, and it will be a great experience for me. He's another young driver like me, and for sure both of us will try to prove everything we can to be on the top."



RUBENS BARRICHELLO

DRIVER, HONDA

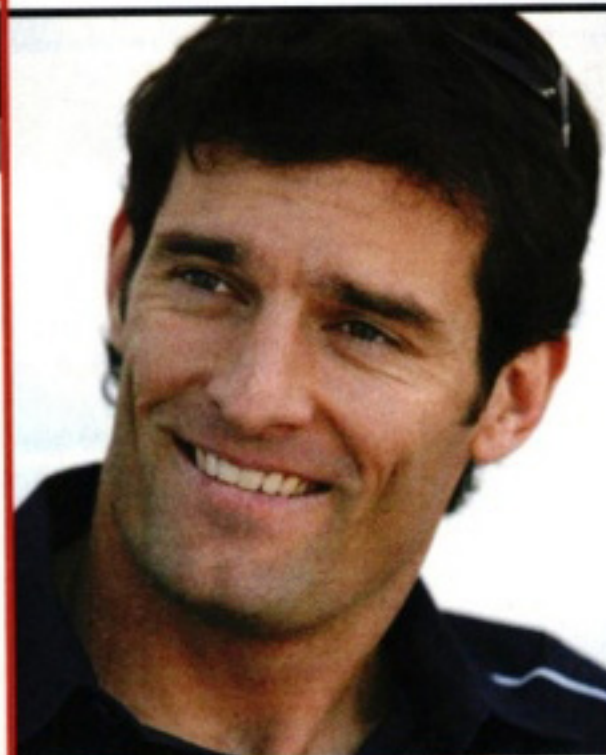
"THAT'S A tricky one. The people around Michael had so much belief in everything he said that they're all going to have to adopt a different philosophy without him and Ross there. That might be difficult for the team and for Kimi. The level of feedback he can give the team will be crucial in a time of change. If he wins straight away he'll be loved. If he doesn't, the relationship won't last long. If you win more the love is there."



NICK HEIDFELD

FORMER TEAM-MATE

"I HAVE my thoughts on how Kimi and Felipe will compare, but I'm not going to share them! It will be hard to follow Michael, especially at Ferrari obviously, because the team was built around him. Basically, many of the people were already with him at Benetton, so it was perfect for him. It will be very difficult for the other two to find an equally good way to work together. But honestly I think it could have a bigger effect to lose a good guy on the technical side than a good driver. Kimi and Felipe are both good drivers as well."



MARK WEBBER

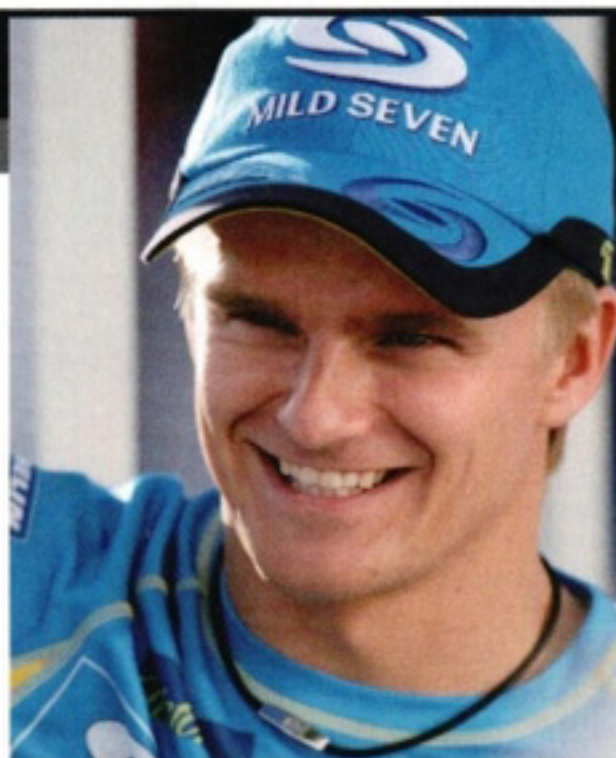
DRIVER, RED BULL RACING

"HE'S A very different cat from Michael, that's for sure, but he's definitely a guy with a superstar amount of talent even in his little finger. He's suffered from having some incredibly unreliable cars over the past two years. Fast as he is, you definitely feel he could put a little bit more into it away from the track. If and when he really decides to get with the programme the results could be frightening."

HEIKKI KOVALAINEN

DRIVER, RENAULT

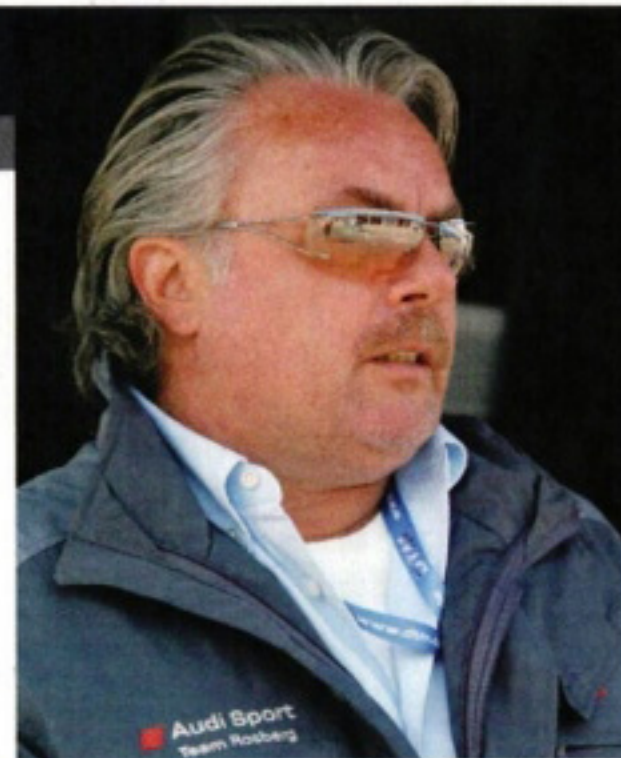
"HE'S GOING to be favourite next year and the toughest guy to beat, definitely. Ferrari finished the year very strongly and next year with everyone on Bridgestones it's not going to be a disadvantage for them, is it? I think he'll be mighty quick and with Kimi's speed, when he takes off he'll be winning races, no problem. He works completely differently from Michael from what I can see. Kimi relies on the team to do the job more than Michael ever did – but that's just a different way of working."



KEKE ROSBERG

1982 F1 WORLD CHAMPION

"HE'LL BE brilliantly fast. It's almost stupid to ask the question. I believe he's the fastest driver in the paddock and that's all Ferrari needs from him. I don't believe Michael was the guy who held Ferrari together, good as he was. The team can hold itself together if it has a fast driver in the car. Jean Todt is a smart principal and he'll be able to build up a strong rapport with Kimi. It's a great move for him."



PAT SYMONDS

EXEC DIR OF ENGINEERING, RENAULT

"HE HAS a hard job ahead of him. Ross [Brawn] has done a super job with knitting the team together, making it a very clear, logical and targeted team. There is a great danger of that slipping away without Ross there. If the initial results are not up to expectations, then you will see their character. If anything like that started to happen while Ross was there, he would stamp on it and pull it together. Let's just see whether that happens now. I don't think it will be easy, especially with the Italian media in there pushing and agitating. It's a hard job."



GIL DE FERRAN

SPORTING DIRECTOR, HONDA

"I THINK he'll do a great job. A good driver is a good driver and he's one of the top two, no question. I have never worked with him, but from the outside it looks like he operates differently from Michael. But there are many ways to skin a cat or open a banana. I'm sure it will take driver and team some time to figure each other out, but they're both big and clever enough to work through any short-term issues they may encounter."



MARTIN WHITMARSH

COO, McLAREN

"HE'LL BE a lot more comfortable without Michael Schumacher there! Ferrari is a very Italian team, but it's got some professional people in the organisation. Kimi is a pretty adaptable, insular individual in many ways, and he'll do what he did with us. He gives you fantastic input and contribution when you need it, and when he doesn't want to give it, he goes to sleep... He's still a young driver, we're an ambitious team, so never say never. We'll try and beat him on the track, but we'll try to keep a relationship, so who knows what will happen in the future?"

RON DENNIS

TEAM PRINCIPAL, McLAREN

"HE'S GOING to find a very different environment there. And hopefully it will be one in which he is able to fulfil his own wishes. Ferrari, too, will find life quite different working without Michael – it'll have to adapt to Kimi's different strengths and weaknesses. Only time will tell how it will work."





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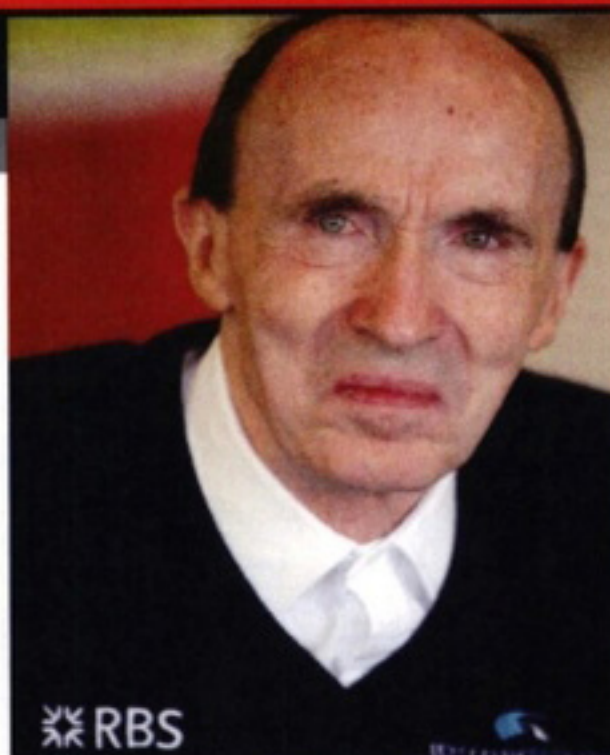
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SIR FRANK WILLIAMS

TEAM PRINCIPAL, WILLIAMS

"I HARDLY know Kimi, but when he came into Formula 1 I thought 'Oh no, how did we miss him?' because when he arrived he was just way up there with true star status. But he hasn't taken it seriously enough, which I find very sad. I don't follow what he does when he's away, but Michael's approach is different to Kimi's and maybe his is the more professional one. It's a crying shame. Maybe Jean Todt can sort him out, in which case it's a pity Michael is not in the other car because that would have been true Titans racing. I really hope he changes and does a brilliant job."

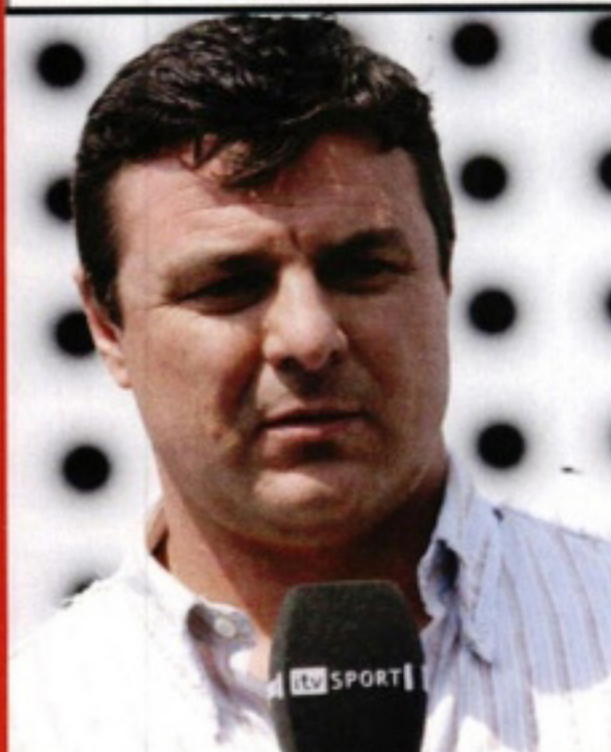
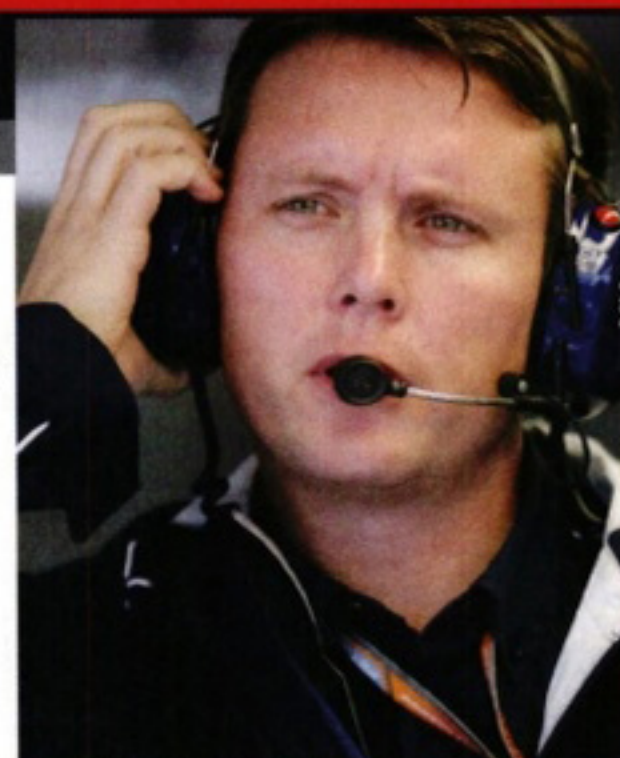


RBS

SAM MICHAEL

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR, WILLIAMS

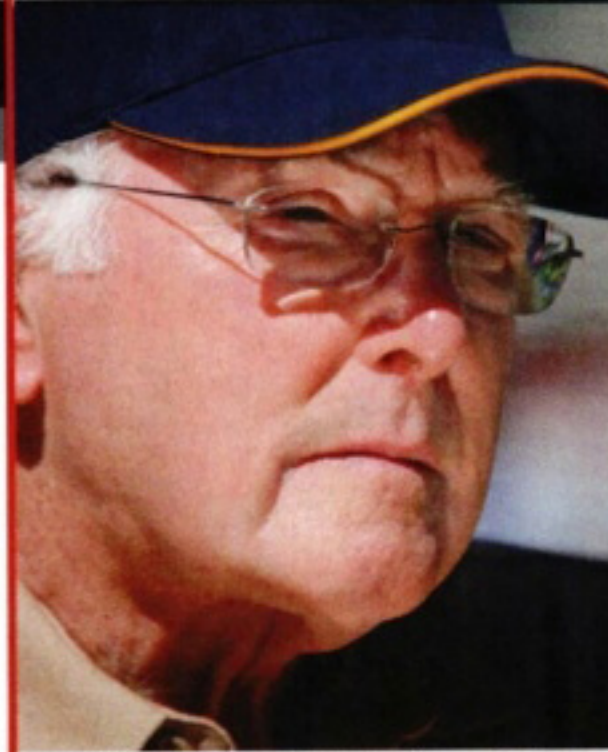
"KIMI HAS obviously been one of the top three drivers over the past few seasons, and next year he'll be going to the team that finished 2006 strongest. It's a new challenge for Ferrari, but I can't see them not being competitive. I'm sure he'll be winning. And he'll want to be winning soon because there are a lot of guys coming up: Nico Rosberg, Robert Kubica, Heikki Kovalainen, Sebastian Vettel and Lewis Hamilton, which is fantastic for F1, but puts pressure on the established guys. But Kimi will be fine because he has the talent."



MARK BLUNDELL

ITV COMMENTATOR

"I THINK he's the right guy at the right time for Ferrari. There's no question about his outright pace and there's no doubt that his focus is going to be on winning the world championship and there's every reason to believe he will. If he doesn't win it the question marks about him aren't going to get any smaller, they're going to get bigger."



MURRAY WALKER

COMMENTATOR

"HE HAS an incredibly difficult job — following the guy who has transformed Ferrari's results since 1996. It's not easy leading and inspiring out of the cockpit while also driving like a genius in the cockpit. While Kimi is obviously a brilliantly quick driver, I have no reason to believe that he's an inspirational leader who can galvanise people around him. My image of him is that he gets the best out of the car he's provided with, but he may not be as good at making it go faster by doing things out of the car with the people around him, as Michael Schumacher was."



ALL PORTRAITS: LAT

Autosport

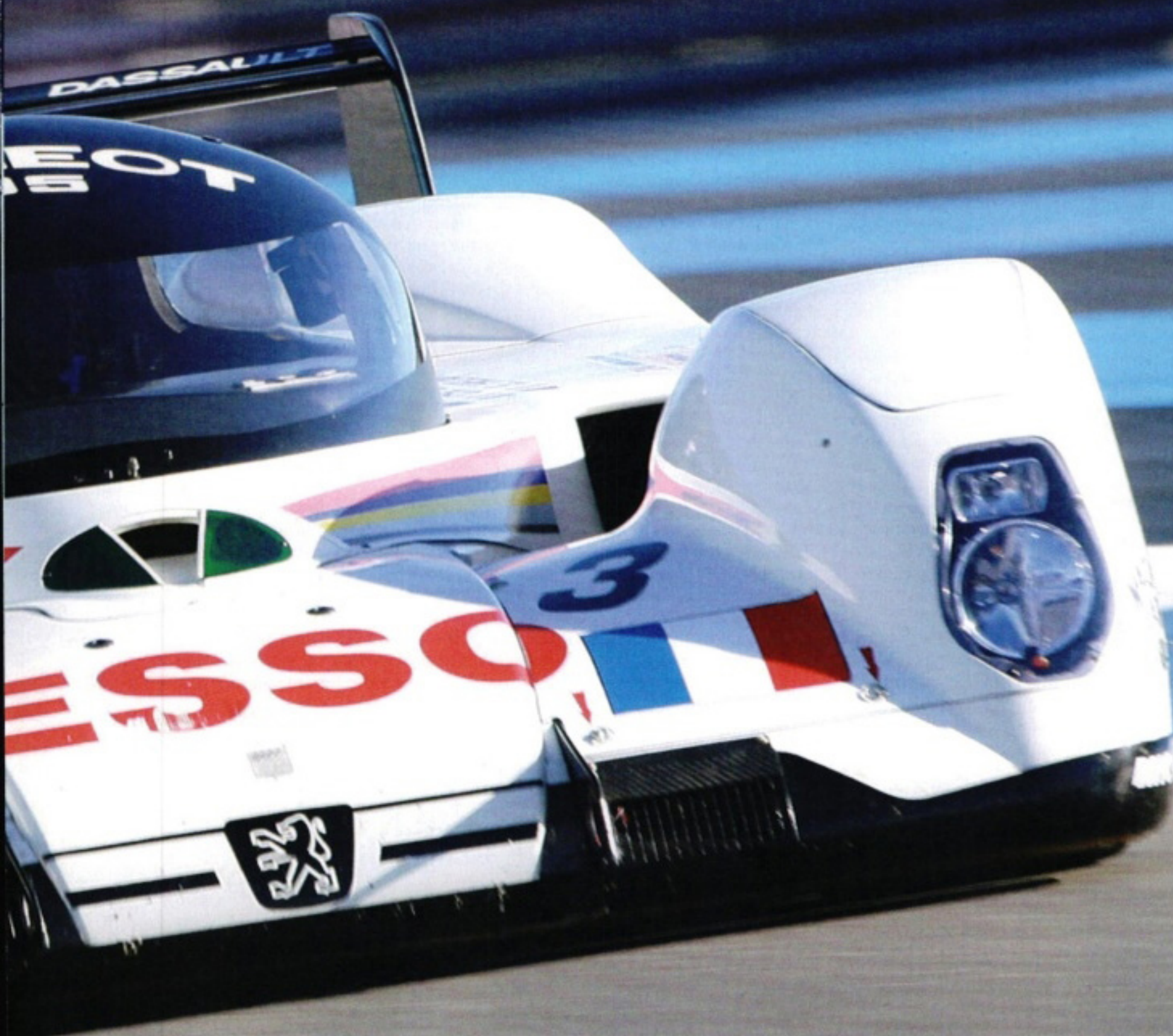
TRACK TEST

PEUGEOT 905 EVO 1 *BIS*

DRIVEN BY **HENRY HOPE-FROST**
VENUE **PAUL RICARD, FRANCE**
DATE **OCTOBER 25**



COMPTON



SNUG IN THE PUG

Pedal to the metal in the '93 Le Mans winner. Fabulous! By HENRY HOPE-FROST



Top to bottom:
Initial laps aboard
an Opel-Lotus
single-seater
help with learning
the circuit;
"Think of Ann
Widdecombe..."

HHF tries to calm
himself down; Rule
number one - don't
stall it; Ex-F3
champ and F1 racer
Patrick Gaillard
hand-signals HHF
out of the pits

aboard the Prost
AP02; Slower
than F1 speeds
accounted for by
V8 rather than
V10 engine - and
a head blocking
the airbox

Excuse the slightly puerile brainteaser that follows, but it perfectly illustrates the point of this feature. Here goes: spot the odd one out among this little lot - Philippe Alliot, Mauro Baldi, Mark Blundell, Christophe Bouchut, Thierry Boutsen, Geoff Brabham, Yannick Dalmas, Teo Fagioli, Alain Ferte, Eric Helary, Henry Hope-Frost, Jean-Pierre Jabouille, Pierre-Henri Raphanel, Keke Rosberg, Eric van de Poele, Derek Warwick, Karl Wendlinger.

Sixteen of those 17 names are, or were, experienced, talented and professional racing drivers, right? Yes. So that leaves just me, and I'm none of those things. Thing is though, there is a very good reason why my name appears, albeit incongruously, among such exalted company - I have driven one of the fastest and most sophisticated examples of Group C sports-prototype exotica ever created. Hang on! Before you turn over half a dozen pages and read something else, I've got to tell you how and why - because you can drive it too...

The invitation to sample Peugeot's 905 Evo 1 B's (905B, to you and me) and, by way of a warm-up, an Opel-Lotus single-seater and a Cosworth V8-engined F1 chassis, came from AGS Formule 1, the ultimate automotive boys' toys-biased day out money can buy. Barely able to control the spontaneous and rather unpleasant outburst of joy and trepidation when the email pinged in on that otherwise mundane September day, I set about trying to comprehend just what I was in for.

Initially, it required a quick recap of the 1993 Le Mans 24 Hours - a race won by the car I would be driving. Yes, the actual one. 905B-EV 11, to be precise.

My first introduction to this 3.5-litre V10-powered monster came on the Mulsanne straight at about midnight on June 19 that year. Armed with the right pass, I'd navigated the woods and golf course and found a vantage point high up on a bank just 15 feet from the hallowed N138. I heard the high-pitch scream from the 650bhp, multi-cylinder motor coming out of Tertre Rouge a couple of miles away and knew then that I was in for an aural experience quite unlike any other. Just a moment later, 'my' car, with its clever, glow-in-the-dark number three, passed me at 220mph-ish over the brow after the Mulsanne kink. I managed to stand alone in the dark for about two hours marvelling at the trio of incredible Pugs and their Toyota TS010 rivals. My best-ever Le Mans memory duly uploaded, I headed back to the media centre, lest any more sensory overloading did me some sort of permanent damage.

Thirteen years later and I'm reunited with 905 number three at Paul Ricard on a warm and still October day as a guest of this incredibly slickly-run and exclusive driving school. Although still and quiet in the corner of a pit garage, my car provokes a sharp intake of breath as I catch its brilliant white, slippery bodywork and vast aerodynamic appendages. The official Categorie 1 stickers are there, as are the names of 1993 Le Mans winners Brabham, Bouchut and Helary.

"Are they really going to let me out in that, mate?" I ask photographer Malcy Griffiths.

"Bonkers!" he replies, while snapping away excitedly for the detail shots.

The AGS Formule 1 staff - all of whom are disarmingly polite and helpful, as well as being well-versed in the art of reining in over-ambitious and enthusiastic pupils - direct the remaining seven members of my equally privileged group upstairs for the first of three important briefings in the 'Masters' course - one of three offered by the school. The onus of the day, quite obviously, is on safety and all conceivable dos and don'ts are covered. Reassuringly, chief instructor Patrick Gaillard, a former Formula 3 champion and Ensign F1 racer, assumes some degree of circuit driving knowledge from his pupils, so the basics of braking, turning in, apex-clipping and corner exit are almost passed up. What he wants to instill in us is that we're about to be unleashed around a state-of-the-art facility in thoroughbred racing cars. Crashing, Gaillard insists, simply isn't on...

Two laps in a people carrier give us all a better-than-nothing glimpse of the Paul Ricard layout. We'll be using the short circuit used in the 1990 French Grand Prix - the last F1 race to be held in the south of France. That means a 2.3-mile blast around just one of the configurations on tap at the

sophisticated, Bernie Ecclestone-owned test track. The F1 impresario has owned the circuit since 1998 and has turned it into an incredible venue. Security is tight and the facilities, unsurprisingly, staggering. Even the briefing rooms feel like blue-chip company boardrooms. The lack of gravel traps - replaced by high-grip, brightly coloured asphalt - helps to settle the nerves, particularly after somebody in the people carrier confidently announces, 'well, at least there's nothing to hit!'

Back in pitlane after our familiarisation laps in the underwhelming 12-seater Renault Trafic, I spy a fleet of immaculate Opel-Lotus single-seaters in which I will conduct my initial lappery. I am assigned one of the 2-litre, slicks-and-wings machines and get strapped in, with the help of one of those polite and helpful AGS staff I mentioned. He tells me exactly what to do without making me feel like I know nothing.

Eight laps aren't enough to break any lap records - but that's not the point. I learn my way round and re-acquaint myself with a level of power, grip and feedback that's utterly alien to what's on offer on the morning commute. The little Opel is great fun, in that overgrown-kart sort of way. Things happen when you tell them to without any extra fuss. It's quick enough to focus the senses but not in the neck-snapping, eyeball-rolling way that prevents any sort of self-evaluation.

That comes next...

I extricate myself from the Opel and head back into the garage for my debrief with Gaillard. He points out a few things: earlier turn-in here, brake later there, but is happy that I'm not a danger to myself or, more importantly, the others and that I'm qualified to go out in the next car: a 1999 Prost AP02 grand prix car! Surely some mistake?

The Prost is fitted with a Cosworth V8 engine - not original, factory-fitted motivation, you understand - but still another world away from what I've just (ever!) driven.

Once any notion that I'm not going to fit in a car built around the five-foot-nothing Nick Heidfeld is dispelled - there's in effect no seat in the car - I am strangely calm and begin to think about the immediate priorities. One: don't stall

"THE YEAR I WON AT LE MANS, WE WERE FLAT OUT FOR OVER 23 HOURS. WE COULD ONLY BACK OFF IN THE LAST HOUR" DEREK WARWICK

it; two: brake early for first corner; three: feed the power in u-n-b-e-l-i-e-v-a-b-l-y carefully on to the Mistral straight. I do not want to be the first one to end up in Marseille High Street.

With Gaillard in close attendance offering pre-ordained hand signals for clutch in, paddle shift into first, revs, more revs, more revs, more revs, clutch out slowly, slowly, slowly, I pull away and head out of pitlane and squeeze the power. I only push the pedal half way down and it feels like my worst Alton Towers nightmare. I lift for the tight, downhill right-hander and go for the comfort of the middle pedal. No need, shutting the throttle has made the car almost stop. I select first gear and drive up to the apex while, oddly, finding the time to recall Mauricio Gugelmin cartwheeling his Leyton House over the pack at the same point in 1989.

Through the flick-flack esses and onto Mistral. Third-fourth-fifth-sixth, quicker than you can say it. It's impossible to relax and let the car do the work. I find myself holding my breath and gripping the wheel too tightly as this overpowered and underweight wheeled missile charges up the straight. The rest is just a blur as the Prost punches through Signes (after a huge lift and a drop into fifth of course) and on into Le Beausset, L'Epingle and Virage du Pont - the twisty bits between the end of Mistral and the end of the lap. Eight times I do this and it is, without doubt, the most exhausting and exhilarating thing I have ever done. And it's two cylinders down and on old wet tyres. Well, thank the Lord for that.

I share those feelings with Gaillard, who pats me on an aching shoulder and tells me I am fast (he's being polite) and smooth (a relative term, surely?).

After a quick sit-down in the sun and a chance to think about what I have done, it's time for a light lunch in the one of the sumptuous hospitality suites above the pits. Superb

"I'm going to fit in this even if I have to saw part of my legs off!"

THE STORY OF THE 905

THE LAST OF THE FAMOUS INTERNATIONAL SPORTS-RACERS

THE PEUGEOT 905, one of the most advanced sports-racers ever, was unveiled on July 4 1990 at Magny-Cours. Under the guidance of Peugeot Talbot Sport chief Jean Todt, who had led the French outfit to world rally championship glory in the mid-1980s, the new prototype was conceived to take on the might of Jaguar, Mercedes and Toyota in the World Sportscar Championship arena. Not only that, Peugeot was desperate to add victory in the Le Mans 24 Hours endurance classic to its tally of international successes, so the brief was to create the fastest and most reliable prototype possible.

Featuring a carbonfibre chassis and a light alloy 3.5-litre V10 engine to comply with the new regulations that would take hold for 1991, the 905 made its debut in the penultimate round of the '90 World Sports-Prototype Championship in Montreal. Despite drivers of the calibre of ex-grand prix winners Jean-Pierre Jabouille and Keke Rosberg, the car did not set the world alight.

At the start of 1991, the 905 took a fortuitous victory in the opening round at Suzuka when the car's chief rival – the then far superior Jaguar XJR-14 – broke. In fact the awesome Jaguar would give Peugeot plenty to worry about during the year. Further ire came at Le Mans where the two 905s failed before the end of the fourth hour. It was clear that the 905 needed a drastic overhaul.

Things improved in the second half of the season

when Peugeot introduced the revised 905 Evo 1 *Bis* (more commonly referred to as the 905B). Dramatic bodywork alterations consisting of a two-tier rear wing and an optional full-width front wing, as well as the introduction of a more powerful engine, gave Peugeot the impetus it needed to take on and defeat Jaguar. A pair of one-two finishes at Magny-Cours and Mexico for Yannick Dalmas/Rosberg and Philippe Alliot/Mauro Baldi was the perfect warm-up for a full-on championship/Le Mans assault in '92.

Jaguar disappeared in 1992 and the World Sportscar Championship was on its last legs, but Peugeot's motivation to continue developing the 905 hinged solely around Le Mans – a race the company was desperate to win. The hard work paid off when Derek Warwick, Mark Blundell and Yannick Dalmas took a famous victory, with another of Peugeot's three-car team finishing on the bottom step of the podium thanks to Alliot, Baldi and Jabouille.

With no championship to fight for in 1993 – it was finally killed off on cost grounds – Peugeot concentrated on winning Le Mans for a second time. In truly dominant fashion, 905B-EV11 (below) led an historic one-two-three for the French squad in the world's toughest race. And that was the end of the Peugeot 905.

A Formula 1 engine supply deal with McLaren for 1994 meant the motor had a stay of execution, but the unsuccessful partnership fizzled out.



DEREK WARWICK ON...

DECLUTTERING THE DEBRIEF

THE THING to remember is that when I joined Peugeot I had just left the team that had produced the fastest, most grippy sportscar ever built – the Jaguar XJR-14. The 905 was not as quick nor as nimble but it had the most fantastic engine. The gearbox was probably its only Achilles heel – it was heavy and needed to be treated carefully. But the all-round package was very good indeed. The Michelin tyres were superb and the car was consistent and reliable over a stint with a great spread of power and good downforce.

The year I won Le Mans in the 905, in 1992, we were absolutely flat out for nearly 23 hours. It was only in the last hour and a quarter that the other 905 and Geoff Lees's Toyota ran into problems so we were able to back off a bit. The remarkable thing about that was that the car

could have carried on after the end of the race – the engine was just so sweet.

One funny thing that I remember from my time with the 905 was my very first test, at Paul Ricard. I went into the motorhome to be confronted by about 65 Peugeot people, all of whom wanted their penny's worth. I lost my patience after half an hour

or so and stormed out. Team boss Jean Todt followed me out to ask what the problem was. I told him that it was just madness to run a team like that and that we

needed a few engineers and the drivers and that was that. Sure enough, at the next debrief, there were only six people!

At the time, the World Sportscar Championship was struggling. I suppose I could have stayed at Peugeot for '93 and tried to win Le Mans again, but I was concentrating on Formula 1 with Footwork.



MARK BLUNDELL ON...

THE BEST SPORTSCAR OF ITS TIME

I'VE GOT fond memories of the 905, obviously, because I won Le Mans in it. I was a test driver with McLaren at the time and fortunately they released me to do Le Mans as a one-off. It was probably the most

advanced sportscar at the time – it was more like a grand prix car with a body on it. It produced good levels of downforce and was well balanced in all areas. It was good to its

tyres, too – the Michelins were superb. I agree with Derek about the gearbox, but if you were good to it, it behaved itself. Thing is, gearboxes are always a problem in long-distance sportscars.

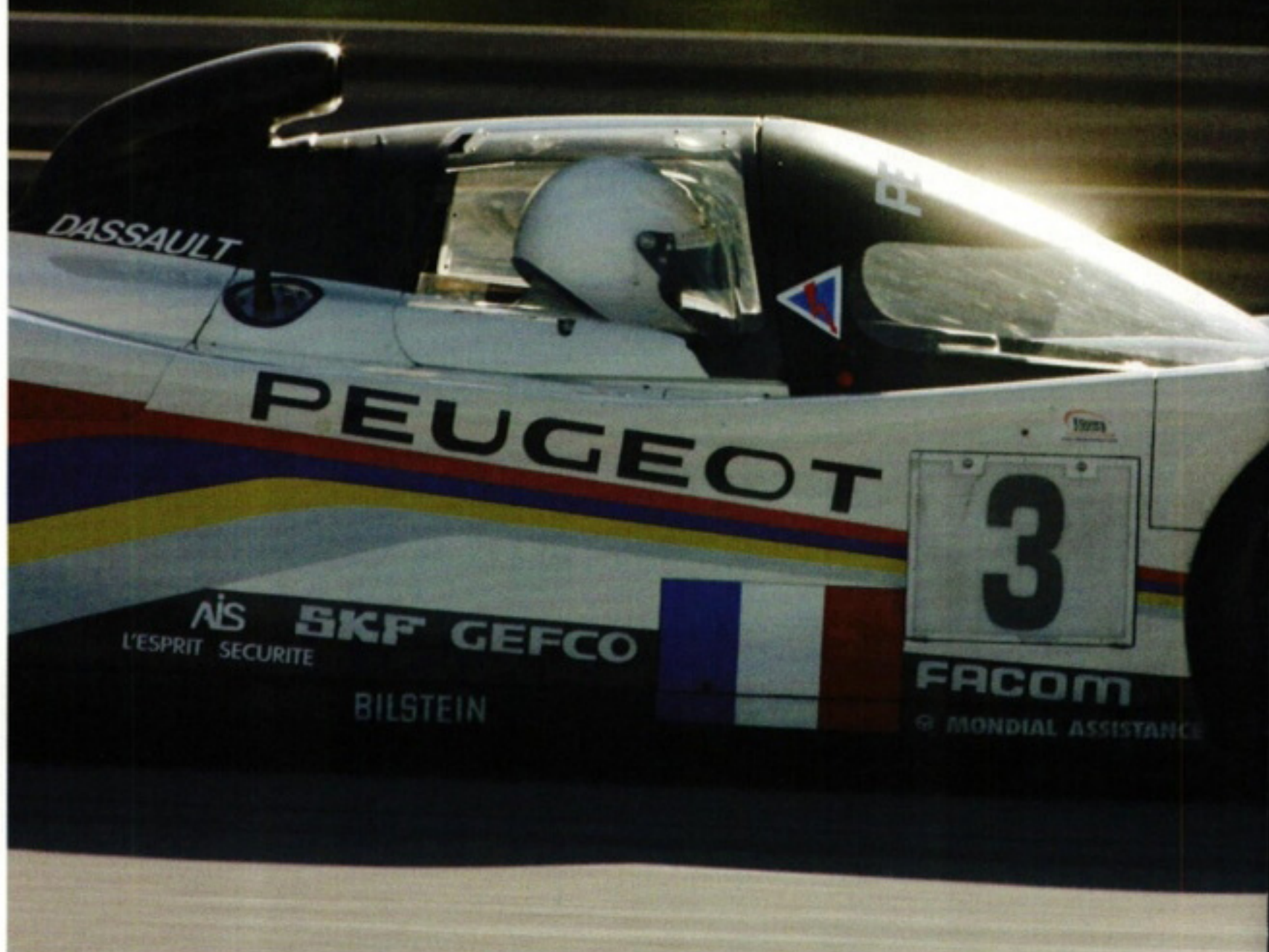


After we won Le Mans in 1992 we suggested for a laugh that we should see if we could re-start the car after the finish, just to see if it would. It started on the button and sounded as perfect as it had done

before the race. A stonking engine which, when mated to McLaren's F1 car a few years later, was awful. I couldn't understand that, but then I guess there are all sorts of

issues with packaging from one car to another. When I signed for Ligier for 1993 I devoted all my energies into staying in F1 and making a good job of it, so there was no chance I could do Le Mans in '93.

"WE SUGGESTED FOR A LAUGH THAT WE SHOULD SEE IF WE COULD RESTART IT AFTER THE FINISH – IT STARTED ON THE BUTTON" MARK BLUNDELL



surroundings and equally good food (there's no booze, of course) add to the ambience of this incredible experience. It's also a good opportunity for another chat with Gaillard. He needs to emphasise the significance of what's next.

The priceless and historically significant machine I'm about to sample is not a mock-up and doesn't come with a smaller, de-tuned engine to help hopeless wannabes like me get their fix. This is a high-calorie bespoke Le Mans winner in whose presence I am not worthy. I feel like a pubescent teenager about to go on his first date... with Heidi Klum.

Up close the Peugeot 905 is smaller than it appears on track. Must be something to do with the fact that it's much wider and longer than it is tall. The tiny frontal area belies its overall presence, though. The huge rear wing dominates the back end of the car, protruding as it does way beyond the gearbox. It reeks of a machine created to weld itself to the road and cover ground quicker than science ought to allow. Under instruction, I sit on the wide sidepod and swing my legs into the narrow cockpit aperture and slide down into the seat. Once the extra padding is removed, I fit... but only just. The concave windscreen brings back memories of the hours of on-board Group C footage I've watched. It dawns on me with alarming suddenness that this is real, that I am about to experience what has been, until now, an alien and entirely

Right, clockwise from top: Plenty of baffling controls in the claustrophobic cockpit; Wooden gear lever works the sequential 'box; 905B-EV11 still has its stickers from Le Mans 1993; it's like an F1 car with a roof

Main: A Dassault on the senses? Flat in top the 905 is deafening



passive concept. There is a vast array of switchgear and LEDs in front of me – none of which, I'm told, will concern me. Good, have I not got enough to worry about?

I flick the fuel pump toggle and press the starter button. My sweat pores open and my heart rate increases as the 3.5-litre V10 screamer bursts into life. The carbon monocoque flexes in protest as I blip the featherweight throttle. The door is closed and I at once feel claustrophobic as the adrenaline surges through my veins. Where's Patrick? I need his guiding hand signals and very French, although reassuring, nodding to help me overcome the overbearing sense of being alone and incapable. I push the clutch, which is surprisingly compliant for what is essentially a grand prix car with a roof, and push the wooden-knobbed sequential gear lever forward into first. The Pug moves off easily and I pull back on the lever for second. The noise is deafening, even at little more than idle. The enormous Michelin slicks have a vice-like grip on the track surface as I head up Mistral for the first time. I'm pulling maximum revs (12,500) in sixth and I'm battered by the downforce. It's a strange feeling – the car wants to follow all the contours and imperfections of the road. It doesn't float over them like I expect it too, but is guided by them, leaving me to make small steering inputs while trying to hold my head up and focus on the fast-approaching horizon that is Signes. I've

only got four laps in this staggering projectile so I try to take in as much of the experience as possible. The brakes and the mid-corner grip just hurt me and I miss a few braking points and apices as I try not to grit my teeth while using the carbon stoppers and not to hold my breath while cornering. No matter, the invisible rails in the road pull me round every time.

The four laps pass all too quickly and I trundle back down the pitlane. I've had little more than five minutes in the 905. I simply cannot imagine what a couple of hours in the dark at Le Mans, while it's raining, must have been like.

I'm shattered, mentally, physically and emotionally. I pace up and down in the pitlane shaking my head while others take their turn in 905.

At the presentation ceremony at the end of the day, Patrick Gaillard congratulates us on a good day's work (nobody went off) and presents us with a 1:43-scale diecast model of the 1993 Le Mans winner, as well as a certificate. That treasured piece of paper will always serve as a poignant reminder of the day I drove an F1 car and a Le Mans winner in the same day.

■ Enormous thanks must go to AGS Formule 1 for giving me the opportunity to realise a dream, particularly to Patrick Gaillard and Nathalie Auvray. For an out-of-this-world experience, I urge you to log on to www.agsformule1.com or telephone +33 494 60 97 00. Then start saving... ☛

TECH SPEC

PEUGEOT 905 EVO1 BIS

ENGINE	Peugeot water-cooled, normally aspirated 3499cc, 40-valve, 80-degree V10
POWER	650bhp @ 12,500 rpm
TORQUE	370 Nm at 7500rpm
CHASSIS	Carbonfibre monocoque
TYRES	Michelin 320x630x17 (f); 340x700x18 (r)
BRAKES	Carbon discs with Brembo four-pot calipers
WHEELS	Single-piece alloy
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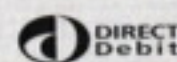
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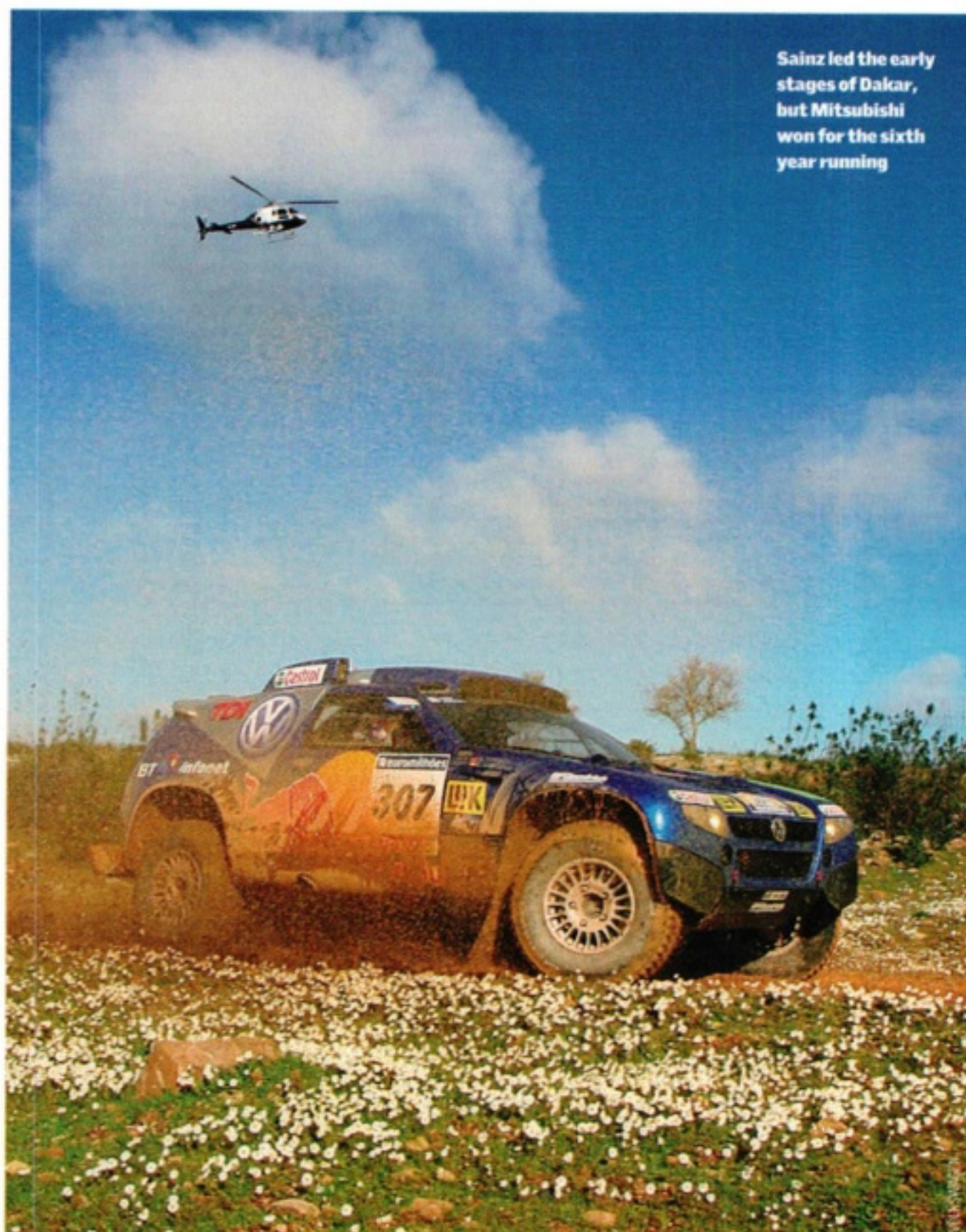
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2006

MOTORSPORT

DIARY

It's been an eventful year; Autosport's staff spool through their memories



Sainz led the early stages of Dakar, but Mitsubishi won for the sixth year running



Dan Wheldon, Scott Dixon and Casey Mears win the Daytona 24

JANUARY

1 It's stage two of the Dakar Rally, and Carlos Sainz leads the way. But they're not even in Africa yet (left)

10 The Renault R26 Formula 1 car hits the track for the first time

15 The Dakar ends at last. Mitsubishi man (and former skier) Luc Alphand and co-driver Gilles Picard win. It's Mitsubishi's sixth straight win

16 Michael Schumacher shakes down the Ferrari F2006 at Fiorano

22 Ford's Marcus Gronholm wins the Monte Carlo Rally from Citroen's Sebastien Loeb

29 Indycar stars Scott Dixon and Dan Wheldon share Daytona 24 Hours glory with Chip Ganassi Racing team-mate Casey Mears (above)

31 Moto GP champion Valentino Rossi joins F1 testing at Valencia. He is within a second of Michael Schumacher

FEBRUARY

5 Another win for Gronholm, this time in Sweden

16 Autosport reveals controversy surrounds the new Toro Rosso STR-01 car, which looks rather like the 2005 Red Bull RB1

19 Jimmie Johnson wins the Daytona 500



MARCH

5 Sebastien Loeb takes the first of many 2006 wins in Mexico. But the WRC drivers hit out at safety standards as animals and people get in the way on stages

12 Fernando Alonso narrowly defeats Schumacher in the F1 season opener in Bahrain (above centre)

12 Team France wins first A1 GP title at Laguna Seca, but it's Mexico's Salvador Duran who wins both races

Innovative victory celebrations became an Alonso hallmark this year



Porsche's LMP2 wins an ALMS race outright at Mid-Ohio



MARCUS PYE
NATIONAL
EDITOR-AT-LARGE

RENEWED ZEAL

SO MUCH happened between January's Autosport International show and this month's Autosport—I attended 26 events over 53 days as reporter, commentator or competitor—but one memory stands out.

My long-awaited return to New Zealand, in January, looked like being a disaster when the ship carrying the UK contingent's Formula 5000 cars failed to arrive after a breakdown en route. But the generosity of our hosts in loaning theirs was extraordinary.

Pukekohe and Ruapuna Park are a world away from Hockenheim, Spa, Croft or Knockhill (all of which I visited among 14 venues), but renewing acquaintances with Kiwi motor sporting legends Graeme Lawrence, Graham McRae and Kenny Smith, meeting new people and seeing different historic cars was a breath of fresh air.

Racing Murray Sinclair's Chevron-BMW B21 was fun, but thundering onto the top straight at 'Pu-ke' in David Abbott's VDS Lola T430 (below) was the highlight of my year.



ALEX MITCHELL

19 Giancarlo Fisichella takes Renault's second straight F1 win, leading Alonso home in Malaysia

22 Audi's new diesel-engined R10 wins first time out at the Sebring 12 Hours

24 Rallying mourns as Jorg Bastuck is killed on the Catalunya Rally. The German co-driver was struck when another car went out of control as he was finishing repairs to his own stricken Citroen C2 Super 1600

26 Sebastien Loeb wins the Catalunya Rally, but the mood is still downbeat

26 Dan Wheldon wins the IRL opener at Homestead. But the weekend is soured by Paul Dana's fatal accident in the final practice session on race morning

APRIL

2 Alonso takes another win at the Australian GP. And the season hits rock bottom for both Button (blown engine) and Schumacher (accident)

2 Andy Priaulx kicks off his World Touring Car Championship defence with a win at Monza

2 The first season of A1GP ends with victory for Malaysia and the Czech Republic

6 Autosport reveals that Damon Hill will become president of the BRDC

9 Loeb takes another win in the Tour de Corse

9 Nelson Piquet Jr and Michael Ammermuller share the wins at the Valencia GP2 opener

9 Sebastien Bourdais starts off another Champ Car season with a win at Long Beach

9 Bernd Schneider takes the DTM opener at Hockenheim



DAMIEN SMITH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

TRESPASSING

I DASHED down the stairs towards the paddock, but a security guard had locked the door. I quickly saw why. The European Grand Prix had just finished and this stairwell was the drivers' route to the podium. Michael Schumacher strode to the stairs, oblivious to my presence. His eyes glimmered, his fists were clenched in sheer delight. I was trespassing in a private moment of joy. Ross Brawn joined him on the stairs, grinned and hugged his driver. Alonso skulked by, HANS device still attached, face set grim, ignoring the men in red. It would be a different story seven days later in Spain, and then again three weeks later in Monaco...



GETTY IMAGES

9 SEAT takes all the wins as the BTCC gets underway with Thompson and Plato doing the business

17 Bruno Senna scores a double win as British F3 gets started at Oulton Park

22 At Imola, Schumacher passes Ayrton Senna's record when he takes his 66th pole position

23 Schumacher registers his first win of the season, outfoxing Renault at San Marino

23 Lola returns to the Formula 3 winners' circle when Joey Foster and Ho Pin Tung take a win each in the German F3 opener

23 Privateer Mike Jordan takes a popular BTCC win at Mondello Park

30 Loeb wins another rally, in Argentina, and Marcus

Gronholm is already conceding that the World Championship is slipping away

MAY

6 The new FIA GT3 championship gets going at Silverstone and is hailed a success

6 Lewis Hamilton gets his first GP2 win

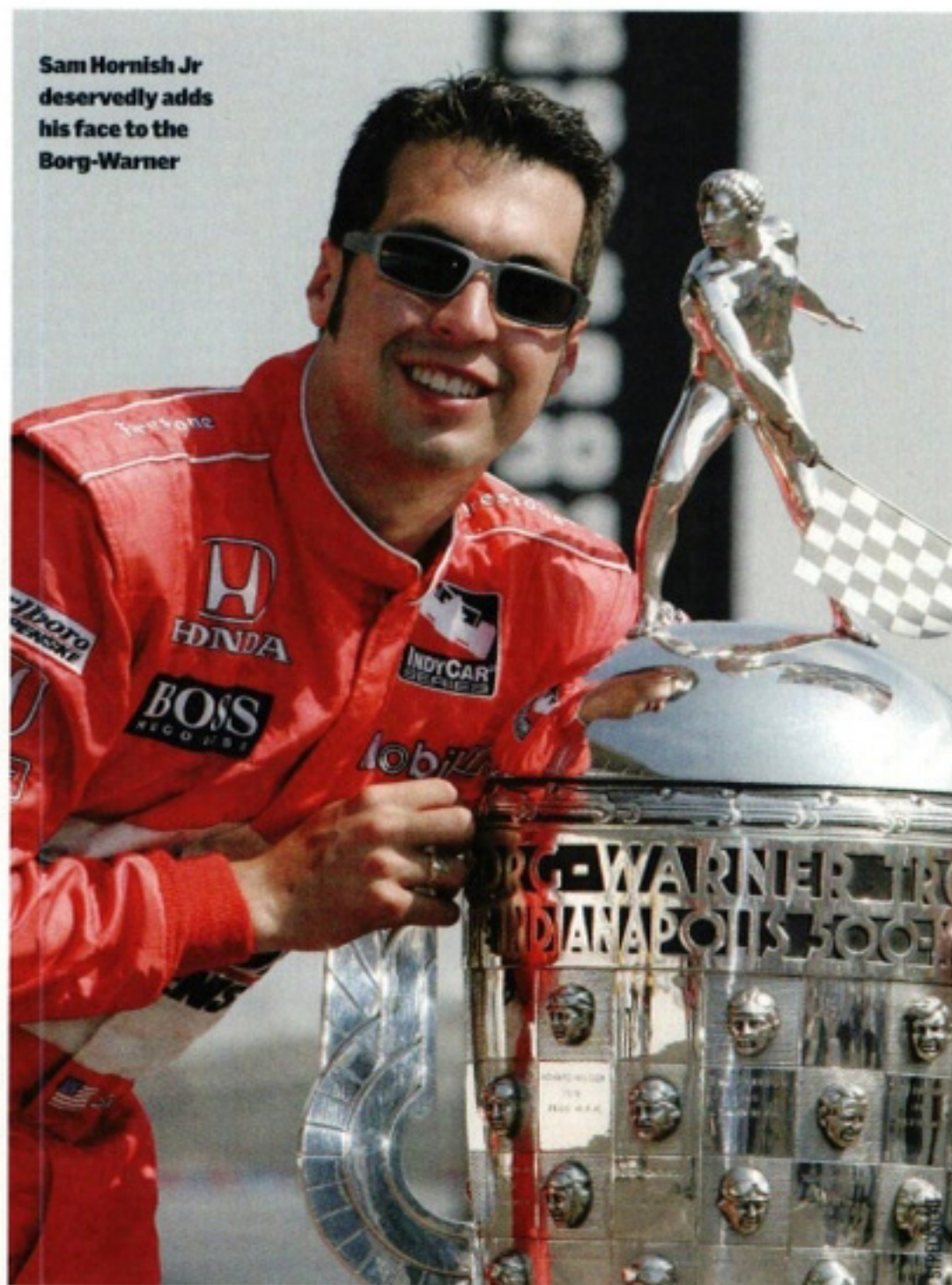
7 Schumacher takes a second straight F1 win, at the Nurburgring. And Hamilton makes it a double in GP2

14 Alonso wins his home Grand Prix at Barcelona

21 Porsche RS Spyder wins an ALMS race outright, taking the marque's first overall prototype win for almost nine years (above right)

21 Loeb scores another WRC win, this time in Sardinia

Sam Hornish Jr deservedly adds his face to the Borg-Warner



Diesel do just fine: Audi's R10 wins first time out at Le Mans



21 Graham Rahal gets his first victory in Champ Car Atlantic, at Monterrey

24 Valentino Rossi rules out a move from Moto GP to Formula 1

27 Schumacher commits his famous Monte Carlo parking offence and is sent to the back of the grid. Hamilton wins the prestigious GP2 race

28 Alonso wins his first Monaco GP

28 Sam Hornish Jr wins the Indy 500 for Penske, beating the impressive Marco Andretti (above left)

JUNE

1 Autosport predicts Lewis Hamilton's McLaren deal

4 At the Acropolis Marcus Gronholm breaks Loeb's four-month WRC winning streak

5 Mike Conway completes a double win as British Formula 3 makes a one-off visit to Pau in France

8 Autosport reveals that Williams F1 will use Toyota power from 2007

11 Alonso wins the British Grand Prix for Renault, while Lewis Hamilton thrills Silverstone with a GP2 double

15 Autosport reveals that Petter Solberg will stay at

his WRC team — Subaru — until 2009

20 The ACO announces that all prototypes will have to run as coupes from the 2010 Le Mans onwards

22 Audi makes Le Mans history when the diesel-engined R10 coasts to victory at its first attempt

25 Michelin makes it 100 grand prix victories as Fernando Alonso wins in Canada

25 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner Oliver Jarvis takes his first British F3 win

JULY

1 2003 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner Alex

Lloyd takes his first Indy Pro Series win at Indianapolis

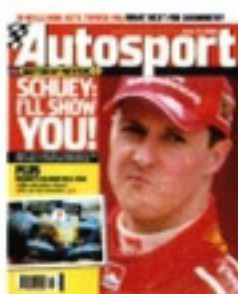
1 The legendary Audi R8 wins its final race, the ALMS round at Lime Rock

2 Michael Schumacher wins at Indianapolis. Juan Pablo Montoya's first corner collision with team-mate Kimi Raikkonen means his days are numbered at McLaren

2 Mattias Ekstrom is the winner when the DTM returns to the UK at Brands Hatch

2 F3 Euroseries tail-enders Peter Elkmann cashes in on a reverse-grid pole to win at Brands Hatch (right)

3 Pirelli confirms that it will end its 34 years in the World Rally Championship at the end of the season



ANDREW VAN DE BURGT
EDITOR

BROKEN SCHU

IT WAS the look on his face that said it all. The usual imperious veil of superciliousness broken, replaced by a genuine expression of shock tinged with a large dose of embarrassment.

Anyone who witnessed Michael Schumacher's reaction to being called a cheat in the post-qualifying press conference at Monaco couldn't forget it. But well before Byron Young had uttered his infamous question: "Michael, do you think you cheated today?" the tone had already been set. A muted chorus of boos greeted the Ferrari driver as he walked into the room. And when he dared to try to convince a pack of some of the world's most cynical people that he really had made F1's crappiest ever driving mistake (come back Taki Inoue, all is forgiven) he lost any lingering support and became an open target. It was one of the great F1 press conference moments, not just of this season, but of all time — a seven-times world champion taken to task and hating every second of it.



DAVID EVANS
RALLIES EDITOR

BEEF'S DO

TOMMI MAKINEN, Petter Solberg, Colin McRae and Markko Martin. They were all there. All there because of Martin. Oh, and the Estonian prime minister. Where am I? Tallinn, that's where. On the Baltic sea in June. Never been here before. Never want to come again under these circumstances.

We've just unveiled a memorial to Michael "Beef" Park. Everybody's mate. That was then, now it's karting time. We're at the race to remember the fella whose only flaw was to support Gloucester. And everybody who is anybody in world rallying is here. For some reason, I've stumbled onto the grid alongside Makinen and company. Suffice to say, I don't win. But I do take on board an experience that will live with me for the rest of my days. And that driving experience is humbled by the humility of Park's attending family.

Out of darkness and all that. Beef's light still burns as bright as ever.





GEMMA BRIGGS
DEPUTY EDITOR

HOT SPA

WHEN MICHAEL Bartels hinted that the 2006 Spa 24 Hours would go down in history as one of the best endurance races ever, he wasn't just blowing his own trumpet as the man who took the chequered flag. The highlight of this year's FIA GT championship was a nail-bitingly close battle raging for almost the entire duration, with the Vitaphone Maserati MC12 of Bartels, Andrea Bertolini and Eric Van De Poele pitted against the Phoenix Racing Aston Martin DBR9 of Andrea Piccini, Jean-Denis Deletraz, Stephane Lemeret and Marcel Fassler. The Aston had the upper hand for the majority of the 24 hours, but the MC12 was never far behind. In fact, with just one hour to go the gap was an incredible half a second. None of the Belgian sportscar fanatics curled up in sleeping bags in the grandstands would have dreamt that Phoenix would fail to take the win, but after the very last stop Bartels came out ahead. Conceding defeat, Phoenix made a splash-and-dash and one of the best GT battles in years frustratingly came to an end.

Jenson Button
excels in damp
conditions to
notch up his first
F1 victory



STALEVAT

30.06.



Elkman turns on
overdrive: Euro F3
tail-ender takes a
reverse-grid win



GILLIAN BELL
MANAGING EDITOR

MEEKE CHIC

A CHANCETO sit alongside Kris Meeke in a Citroen C2 R2 prior to this year's Ulster Rally brought new meaning to the term 'precision driving'.

Junior World Rally Championship contender Meeke had been put to work by Citroen. His task was to give lucky press members and potential buyers a taste of the French company's latest customer car, with numerous blasts along a short asphalt stage high up in the border hills.

My guess is he must have helped to flog a fair few cars. The stage was slightly damp and twisty with plenty of undulations, but Meeke knew exactly where to place the Citroen as we flew over crests and around corners.

It was a thrilling experience, although perhaps not for the local newsman whose report I watched on television that evening. Let's just say he looked slightly green around the gills...



ROY DEMPSTER

9 Montoya sees the writing on the wall and tells McLaren boss Ron Dennis that he will move to NASCAR in 2007. He is replaced by Pedro de la Rosa

16 Sebastian Vettel wins on his Renault World Series debut with Carlin Motorsport

27 Renault's mass damper system is banned in pre-German GP scrutineering

28 Joey Foster's German F3 title bid ends with a big crash on the Lausitz oval

30 Bridgestone racks up its own 100th F1 win, thanks to another Schuey win at Hockenheim.

30 Maserati scores a narrow win in the FIA GT blue-riband, the Spa 24 Hours

AUGUST

1 BMW says Jacques Villeneuve will miss the Hungarian GP and it's clear he won't be back. Robert Kubica is in

3 Champ Car star Cristiano da Matta is in hospital after hitting a deer during testing at Road America

6 Jenson Button gets his breakthrough F1 win at a wet Hungarian GP (above right)

6 Jimmie Johnson makes it a Daytona-Indy double with victory in the Brickyard 400

6 Paul di Resta wins the Ultimate Masters at Zandvoort

13 Sebastien Loeb matches Carlos Sainz's 26-win record as the WRC resumes after its lengthy summer break



PETER MILLS
PICTURE EDITOR

AH, DANIELSSON

PERHAPS it was the atmosphere stirred up by a record 91,246 attendance, or the effects of a glorious September sunshine, but Donington's World Series by Renault meeting provided an unrivalled experience in 2006.

A month previously, Comtec Racing's lead driver, Alex Danielsson, had sustained two crippling write-offs in a soul-destroying weekend at Spa-Francorchamps. One was a massive shunt at Blanchimont, the other involved a fearsome collision at Eau Rouge.

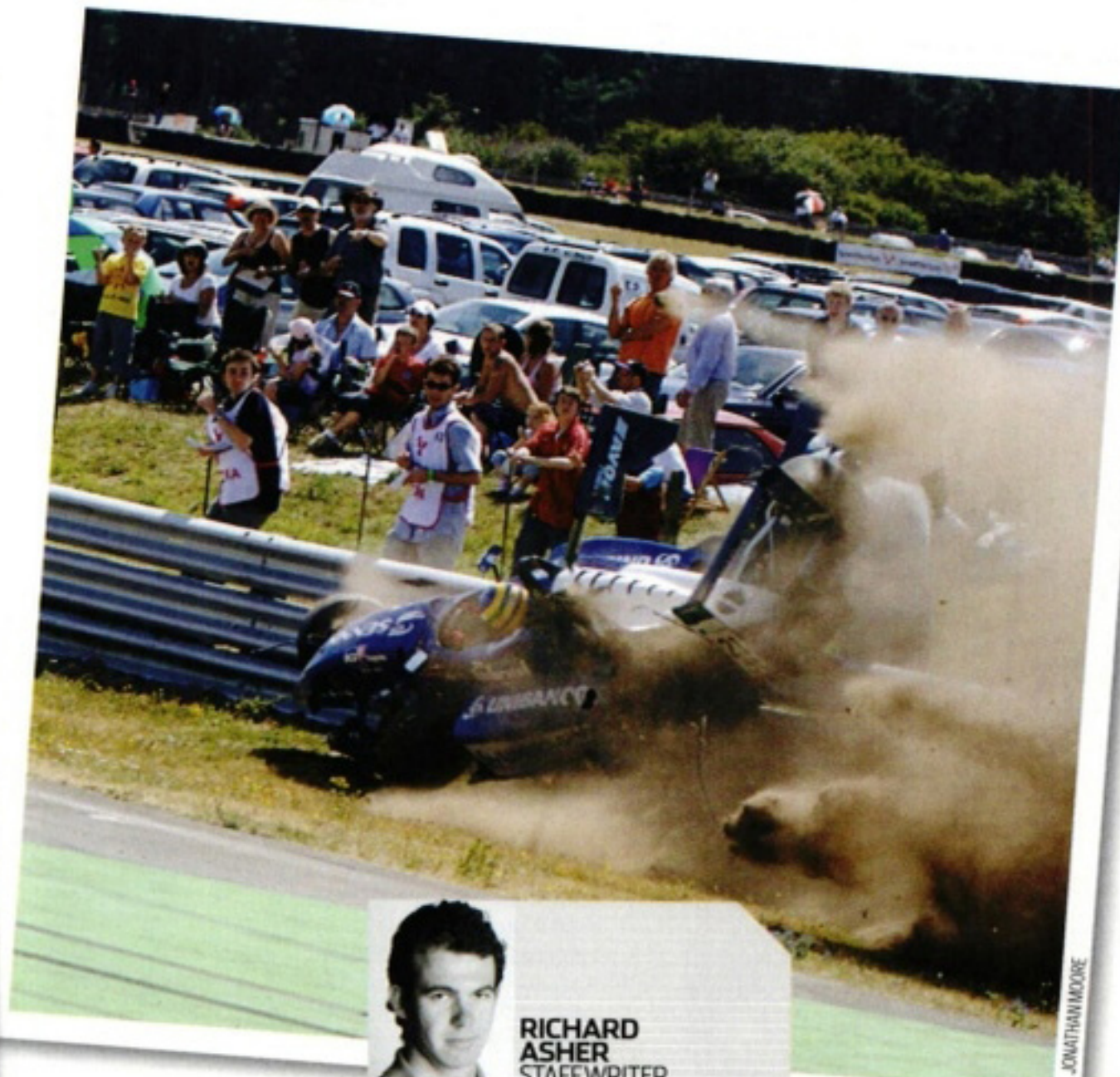
But back on the team's home turf in England the Swedish maestro performed a demolition job of another kind, stomping to the sweetest of victories.

Leaving aside the poignancy of the result after what had seemed an interminable run of heartache and misery, the green fields of Leicestershire were also bearing witness to the turning point of the season. Danielsson's blistering qualifying pace for Sunday's feature event was the first time the true potential of his driving and Comtec know-how was on show.

It was to be the prelude to a remarkable comeback as Alex ran away with the second half of the year, stealing championship glory at the last gasp in Barcelona's season finale. Comtec had almost given up after Spa — just as well it soldiered on!



RENAULT SPORT



JONATHAN MOORE



RICHARD ASHER
STAFF WRITER

CLOSE SHAVE

WATCHING THE A1GP drivers' doomed attempts to get around Beijing hairpin Mk1 last month is a strong contender for memory of the year. So is covering my home country's first major street race — A1GP in Durban back in February. Which, I should point out, passed off with barely a hitch!

But my moment of the year was the one that lasted less than a second. It's got to be my fabulous near-death experience at Snetterton in July.

It wasn't frightening whatsoever, but that's only because I was looking the wrong way and didn't see Bruno Senna flying towards me. I heard the smash and felt the stones before the violent explosion of blue Dallara bashed past me at Revett Straight velocity (above).

It was only a midriff-high barrier, Senna's straightish trajectory and gravity pulling the car down from bridge-level just in time that saved us an unpleasant high-speed meeting. We were both extremely blessed to be able to compare notes afterwards.

Winning in Japan makes Loeb the most successful WRC driver ever



JEFF BLOOM



KEVIN TURNER
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

NIGHT FEVER

THERE ARE many great memories for me to choose from after my first year on the Autosport staff. At the beginning of 2006 I had no idea that I would get to cover club races as far flung as Pembrey, the fight between Ferrari and Panoz in the British GT Championship, or get to see the A1GP encounter at the hallowed Zandvoort circuit.

But of all the moments there are two that stand out. The first is the Britcar 24 Hours at Silverstone. It was my first (twice) round-the-clock race and seeing GT cars blast through the night was incredible. All the better that the BMW Z4 M Coupe won on its debut.

The second of my memories is the Goodwood Revival. I have yet to miss the event and the 2006 edition was one of the best.



Steady, Eddie: Cheever wins, Mansell spins!



DAVID MALSHER
USER EDITOR

SCARRED

LAP 45 of the Grand Prix of Road America, I'm at the Live Timing and Scoring stand, and at the angle the TV cameras are pointing to Turn 11 all the Champ Cars are silhouetted, indistinguishable. So the occupant of the disintegrating Lola we're watching (below) is for the moment unidentifiable.

Beside me stands Derek Legge, Katherine's father, wearing PKV phones. Suddenly a look of horror comes to his face. "No, no, no!" he says in a crescendo, before haring down to the PKV pit.

I had watched someone die, and witnessed someone seeing their daughter killed. Or so I thought. Miraculously, Katherine was merely bruised. I, on the other hand, am now scarred.



CHAMP CAR TV

Lewis Hamilton heads off Piquet Jr at Monza and is crowned GP2 champion



TEE/LAT



MOCKED/LAT



Juan Pablo Montoya (4) is third in his ARCA stock car debut

13 Eddie Cheever wins a damp but exciting GP Masters event at Silverstone (left)

20 Marcus Gronholm sticks it to Sebastien Loeb at Rally Finland, but is it too late for the title?

27 Marco Andretti gets over his Indy 500 woe by winning his first Indycar race, at Sears Point

27 Pescarolo seals the Le Mans series title when it takes its fourth win from four races, at Donington Park

27 Felipe Massa takes his maiden GP win, crossing the line first in Istanbul

SEPTEMBER

3 Loeb becomes the most successful WRC driver in history with a win in Japan (above)

3 Rob Huff wins the WTCC at Brno — from the back

8 After months of speculation, Midland F1 cars finally appear on track as Spyker-Midland

8 Australia mourns as touring car legend Peter Brock dies in a rally in Western Australia

9 Jay Howard wraps up the IPS title with third place at Chicagoland

10 Hamilton survives the Monza GP2 title showdown with Piquet, and is crowned champion (top)

10 Michael Schumacher announces his retirement immediately after winning the Italian Grand Prix. Alonso gets a bizarre penalty in qualifying and his engine blows: title momentum seems to be with Schumacher. In the meantime, Raikkonen's 2007 Ferrari deal is confirmed.

10 Sam Hornish Jr is again crowned Indycar champion. But he only defeats Dan Wheldon on countback

17 Sean Edwards wins the inaugural FIA GT3 drivers' title with two wet wins at Mugello

17 Ho Pin Tung wins the German F3 crown for Lola

24 British driver James Winslow saves Asian F3 rival Manuel Soeparto from his burning car at Sentul

24 Mike Conway is crowned British F3 champion after a double success at Silverstone

24 Katherine Legge is lucky to escape a huge crash at the Road America Champ Car race

24 In Cyprus, Loeb takes yet another win

24 Alex Zanardi makes history when he wins the Istanbul WTCC race despite having lost his legs in a Champ Car crash five years earlier (above right)

27 Jos Verstappen falls out with Team Netherlands over money just ahead of its home A1 GP race, which will also start season two

30 Rinaldo Capello and Allan McNish win the Petit Le Mans for Audi at Road Atlanta

OCTOBER

1 Schumacher wins a mad-weather race in China. He's level on points with Alonso with two races to go

1 South Africa and Germany share the spoils in the A1GP



season opener at Zandvoort. Jeroen Bleekemolen sits in for the now-unpopular Verstappen

1 British F3 master Danny Watts wins his one-off comeback race at Thruxton

5 Autosport reveals Colin McRae will stand in for Sebastien Loeb on Rally Turkey. The WRC championship leader has injured his shoulder in a mountain-biking accident and could miss the rest of the season. It gives Gronholm a faint hope of the title

6 Montoya finishes third in his first stock car race: the Good City 250 ARCA series race (above)

6 Fujitsu V8 driver Mark Porter is killed at Bathurst

8 Fernando Alonso wins the Japanese GP after Schumacher suffers a dramatic mid-race engine failure while leading. The title is almost certainly his

8 Craig Lowndes and Jamie Whincup win the Bathurst 1000km for Ford

15 Gronholm wins in Turkey. McRae retires



EDD STRAW
DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR

GERMAN CONQUEST

IT'S NOT often that you mistake Italians for Germans, certainly not thousands of them. Yet in October, just for a moment, I was convinced that I was in the vicinity of the stadium at Hockenheim rather than overlooking the start/finish straight at Monza. "Schumi, Schumi, Schumi," the crowd chanted in distinctly Germanic style as the hero of the tifosi put in his final official appearance as a Ferrari race driver at the marque's world finals meeting.

This year will be etched in racing history as the one in which Michael Schumacher finally hung up his helmet after 16 years of breaking pretty much every record going, and you could see how much it meant to the tifosi as they headed to Monza in their droves to bid farewell to him.

Regardless of where you stand in what seems to be the ongoing black and white world of hero or villain in which many fans seems to allow no middle ground, Schumacher's retirement is seismic in its significance. It was at Monza that it finally hit home that this was the end and everybody was there to recognise the retirement of the legend.

Well, there were some who seemed a little more interested in themselves. Luca di Montezemolo (inset right), having earlier hijacked the press conference with the Ferrari version of the papal address, is a master of working a crowd. And work he did. Orbiting Schumacher, waving at the crowd, sometimes walking a few paces in front of him in a bid for his share of the limelight.

But the tifosi was unmoved. This was Schumacher's day, and one that will live long in the memory of all who were there and had to battle their way through the ensuing Milanese traffic jams.



LAT

GRIFFITHS/LAT



HENRY HOPE-FROST
SUB-EDITOR

RORTY BUT NICE

THE PRIVILEGE of working on the world's fastest magazine was again brought sharply into focus during 2006.

It's one thing mingling with your heroes — some of whom have become mates — but quite another to be offered a go in their cars. My day at Paul Ricard sampling a Prost F1 car (right) and the 1993 Le Mans 24 Hours-

winning Peugeot 905B Group C screamer (left) was a treat the like of which I'm unlikely to experience again.

When, a few weeks later, the chance to race — twice — in a Group A BMW M3 touring car at Donington Park came up, I was reminded just how fortunate I am.

And to think these jollies are helping to pay off the Hope-Frost mortgage, too...



STUART CODLING
CHIEF SUB-EDITOR

TWO WHEELS BETTER?

ONE OF the potential pitfalls of meeting your heroes — sporting or otherwise — is that they turn out to be thoroughly awful people. So it was with enormous unease that I departed for Hockenheim to interview Valentino Rossi (right) during his DTM test last November.

Pleasingly, Vale was charm personified (not so sure about the elderly mafioso minder modelling the jumper-over-the-shoulders look, though). And it was fascinating to watch him charge around Hockenheim in Mika Hakkinen's Mercedes. So the autographed photo of him in action on the RCV at the 2002 British GP retains pride of place on the wall of the family home — much to Mrs Codling's chagrin.



XPB/COL



Oliver Turvey scooped the McLaren Autosport BRDC Award

APRIL JAMES



Mikko Hirvonen breaks WRC's Loeb-Gronholm duopoly in Oz

MCKENZIE/LAT

15 Matt Neal wins another BTCC title at the Silverstone finale. Mike Jordan crashes his Honda heavily and is briefly hospitalized

15 Schneider becomes DTM meister for the fifth time. Fifth place at Le Mans is good enough

15 Michael Bartels and Andrea Bertolini win the FIA GT title with a second place at Adria

22 Alonso is confirmed as F1 champion when he finishes second to Felipe Massa in Brazil. Schumacher hits trouble early on but fights his way back up to fourth

22 Benoit Treluyer wins the Formula Nippon title

29 Paul di Resta takes Britain's and ASM's third straight Formula 3 Euroseries title

29 Mikko Hirvonen (left) wins his first WRC event, the last Perth-based Rally Australia. It means Loeb's the WRC champion, even though he is sitting at home!

29 Alex Danielsson earns Comtec the Renault World Series championship

NOVEMBER

9 Rossi tests a DTM Mercedes at Hockenheim, lapping less than a second off the pace set by Jamie Green

10 A1GP practice in Beijing turns to farce when the drivers discover that the track's hairpin is too tight for their cars to get around

11 The Beijing track is revised, but now it's manhole covers causing the problem. Qualifying is canned

12 Raceday goes ahead as planned, with Enrico Toccacelo winning Team Italy's first race

19 Mike Conway wins the Macau Grand Prix for Double R

19 Andy Priaulx gets his second straight WTCC title, surviving a nine-way shootout at the Macau finale

19 Jimmie Johnson becomes NASCAR Nextel Cup champion at the Homestead finale

19 Marcus Gronholm wins Rally New Zealand

24 McLaren-Mercedes confirms that it has signed Lewis Hamilton as a race driver for 2007

25 Alex Zanardi drives an F1 car, thanks to BMW building a specially-adapted cockpit (right)

DECEMBER

4 Autosport Awards night, and Oliver Turvey wins the McLaren Autosport BRDC Award (above)



BMW fitted its F1 car with hand controls so Alex Zanardi could take the wheel



**CHARLES
BRADLEY**
NEWS EDITOR

JUST DESERT?

EVER SINCE I saw the classic WWII film *Ice Cold in Alex* as a child, I've been fascinated by the lonely expanse of the desert. But little did I realise that I too, like Sir John Mills as he trekked a perilous course from war-torn Tobruk to the safe haven of Alexandria, would be in danger among the dunes.

I was on the UAE Desert Challenge, a round of the FIA Cross-Country rally raid series, and to get a decent 'spec' our road-going VW Touareg had to drive along the rally route. Alas, our vehicle was more suited to the streets of Dubai than the Moreeb desert, and the lack of desert tyres (the fact it was being driven by the halfwit brother of Manuel from *Fawlty Towers* didn't help, but that's another story) meant we sank down to our chassis rails as soon as our car so much as sniffed a dune. Time to get on the radio: "Er, when did you say the rally cars were due here?"

Despite the 40C heat (and a lack of spades) there was no other choice than to dig it out by hand (right). Like Mills's character Captain Anson in the film, I visualised an ice cold beer at the end of the day as motivation.

But what was that noise coming from yonder dunes? Was it Rommel's Afrika korps? No, it was the leaders in the motorbike class, who suddenly found two tonnes of Chelsea tractor and some idiots digging frantically in their path.

They zipped past just inches away, giving disparaging glances and gestures as we toiled. With the help of some Japanese blokes (where the hell did they come from?), the Touareg was finally out. Just in time, for the cars soon appeared and bounded over the divot we'd created.

Phew! Where's that beer?



JARVO ICS



**STEVEN
ENGLISH**
NATIONAL EDITOR

EVALUATION STATION

THE HIGHLIGHT of my year was the extreme privilege of again attending the evaluation days for the McLaren Autosport BRDC Award at Snetterton.

Aside from the fact that those two days of behind-closed-doors testing go a long way towards deciding the winner of one of the biggest prizes in motorsport, it was a rare opportunity to see some of the finest young talents in Britain undertake the toughest test of their careers so far.

The Renault World Series car (right) is not the easiest beast for any driver to tame, but for those with as little as one season of racing behind them, this was being thrown in at the deepest of deep ends.

Standing in the drizzle at the outside of the Bombhole, absorbing the feedback of 1996 F1 World Champion Damon Hill on the merits and progress of each driver, gave me an incredible insight into what it is for a racing driver to extract the very best from his machinery.



DUNBAR/LAT



**GARY
WATKINS**
INTERNATIONAL EDITOR-AT-LARGE

PACE MAKER

ANDY PRIAULX has just won the World Touring Car Championship. I've chased him back to Macau's Mandarin Oriental hotel in pursuit of that exclusive interview and I have to wait while he's presented to the guests of BMW's sponsor for the weekend, Watsons Water. There's a little old man up on the stage with Andy who looks somehow familiar. He's introduced as Gerry and makes an attempt to sing *You'll Never Walk Alone*. Turns out it's none other than Gerry Marsden (right), he of Gerry and the Pacemakers fame. If you're confused, so was I. My job is to explain the complexities of motorsport, but on this one I can't help. Macau gets more surreal by the year.



REX/FEATURES

CLAY REGAZZONI

The former grand prix winner died before Christmas. NIGEL ROEBUCK pays tribute

There is a particular poignancy when a racing driver, who survived a perilous career, has his life cut short in circumstances which could befall anyone. It was just so 10 days before Christmas when there came the news that Clay Regazzoni, like Mike Hawthorn, like Giuseppe Farina and Mike Hailwood, had lost his life in a road accident. Regazzoni died instantly when his car was in collision with a lorry near Parma, in Italy. He was 67.

Word of Regazzoni's death brought forth an outpouring of grief from all who had known him, for although more than 25 years had passed since his last grand prix, he had remained involved in the motor racing world, sometimes as competitor, sometimes as commentator, and everyone was his friend. As Frank Williams said: "Clay was a gentleman – just a totally adorable character."

There was always a special affinity between Williams and Regazzoni, and it went beyond the fact that Clay once drove for Frank – and indeed was the first man to win a grand prix in a Williams, at Silverstone in 1979. When FW was himself involved in a dreadful road accident, in the spring of 1986, and thereafter faced life in a wheelchair, none understood his predicament better than Clay, who had crashed in the Long Beach GP six years earlier and had never walked again.

Born in Lugano, Switzerland, in 1939, Gianclaudio Regazzoni might have been put on earth to be a racing driver. In a famous photograph, taken at Monza in 1961 on the occasion of his first visit to a grand prix, he is standing in the old paddock, jacket slung over his shoulder, gazing at Giancarlo Baghetti's Ferrari. Just another young face in the crowd, dreaming. Nine years later, in the same place, Clay climbed aboard one of Enzo's cars, and that September afternoon he won the Italian Grand Prix. It was his fifth race in a Formula 1 car.

That afternoon, too, the tifosi took him to their hearts, and kept him there. He may have been Swiss, but his first language was Italian, and he looked and behaved as they felt a racing driver should. Off track they loved the wolfish grin, and on it they recognised a warrior, a racer pure.

And, to complete the picture, of course, there was that name... Clay Regazzoni... exquisite for a racing driver.

He arrived in F1, it must be said, with a ragged reputation. In the lower formulae he had often shown blinding pace, but also a certain tendency to live for the moment, and there were many accidents. His escape from one in particular, in the F3

race at Monaco of 1968, for ever defied explanation. At the exit of the chicane, Regazzoni's Tecno ran wide, passing under the single tier guardrail! The roll-over bar was hard up against the barrier, yet somehow Clay – quite unhurt – hopped from the cockpit on the harbour side...

Once into F1, he completely embraced life with Ferrari. Joining the team at mid-season, he drove in only seven races in 1970, yet finished third in the world championship. And in many ways that first season would always stand as his best, for although he came within three points of the championship four years later, in 1970 there were no discernible mistakes. Through his F1 career, you never quite knew what to expect from Clay: sometimes his driving was full of error, and sometimes it was sublime, as at the Nurburgring in 1974, or Monza in '75, or Long Beach the year after that.

In two stints (separated by a desultory season with BRM, in 1973), Regazzoni spent six years with the team, yet at no stage was he number one. It never bothered him. Ferrari was his life and pride. "I consider myself a good professional," he said. "If I have a big fault, it's that I am not enough ambitious. I drive for me, sure, but also for the team and the public. For me, the thing is to race..."

At the end of 1976, Ferrari signed Carlos Reutemann to partner Niki Lauda, and Regazzoni needed a new team. Earlier there had been an offer to join Brabham, then owned by Bernie Ecclestone, but Clay had assumed he would be staying with Ferrari for 1977. Now, when he went back to Ecclestone, the offer was still open – but the money on offer had been cut by more than half. "For sure he thought I would agree, but I told him it wasn't even worth talking about. It wasn't the money that was so important – I like to race with nice people..."

Thus it was that Regazzoni joined Ensign, moving at a step from one end of the F1 spectrum to the other. Ensign was a shoestring operation, but it ran a grand prix car, and Clay's joy in life was to be a grand prix driver. No retainer? No matter. If it were not a particularly successful year, it was a happy one, the glamorous ex-Ferrari star blending in easily with Morris Nunn's little outfit, where they all loved him, yet

knew it was unlikely he would stay for long.

After driving for Shadow in 1978, Regazzoni then got the offer from Williams. "I remembered that when he'd last driven a world-class car, back in 1976, he'd driven everyone into the ground at Long Beach, scored a lot of other points, and rarely crashed," Frank said. "Not the greatest driver in the world, but superb on his day, and a happy, uncomplicated, man. It worked out very well. Clay was very different from most drivers – he genuinely loved motor racing for its own sake."

In the iconic Williams FW07, Regazzoni had a splendid season in 1979, hustling Jody Scheckter's winning Ferrari all the way to the line at Monaco, and pushing the red cars at Monza. The day of days, though, came at the British Grand Prix, where he won, taking over for Williams when Alan Jones retired. "Bravo, Frank," he said quietly to his emotional boss. That was the essential modesty of the man. It was the team which had won.

After a wonderful Indian Summer, Clay was replaced at Williams by Reutemann, and for 1980 returned to Ensign, where now there was a little more money, and a new car.

At Long Beach he was running fourth in the late laps when the accident came, at the end of Shoreline Drive. Regazzoni approached at over 180mph, as usual, but his brake pedal snapped and the car disappeared, bullet-like, up the escape road.

Unfathomably, a barrier had been erected, closing it off, and the Ensign struck it at huge speed. Clay soon knew he had to face the unimaginable. His spinal cord had been severely damaged, and he was paralysed from the waist down. Over the next couple of years he underwent operations without number, his morale veering between optimism and despair.

Finally, in 1985, he began coming to grands prix regularly again, working as a commentator for Italian TV. "I am quite tranquil now," he said. "I know that the miracle will not happen. But life can still be worth something."

Always a dignified and charming man, as well as an abnormally brave one, Clay Regazzoni will be so much missed. To his family, and innumerable friends, Autosport offers its deepest sympathies. ☞

"CLAY WAS A GENTLEMAN, A TOTALLY ADORABLE CHARACTER"
FRANK WILLIAMS

OBITUARIES

RAYMOND BAXTER 1922-2006

The original and long-time voice of grand prix racing for the BBC, also well known as the first presenter of *Tomorrow's World*

NICK BRITTAN 1937-2006

Author of Autosport's Private Ear column and a major driving force in British rallying over the years, as well as a driver in his early days

CREIGHTON BROWN 1938-2006

A co-founder of McLaren International, and instrumental in Project 4's revitalisation of the grand prix team

ERWIN KREMER 1937-2006

Alongside brother Manfred, Kremer enjoyed success running Porsches at international level and won Le Mans in 1979

COLIN MALKIN 1942-2006

The former British Rally Champion went on to play a key role in Mitsubishi's World Rally success of the 1990s

EDOUARD MICHELIN 1963-2006

Head of Michelin since 1999, Edouard Michelin died in a fishing accident off the coast of Brittany before the Monaco Grand Prix

ELLEN MORGAN 1944-2006

One of Britain's most successful female co-drivers, she made her name alongside Louise Aitken-Walker at international level

NIKKI STEVENS 1965-2006

Co-ordinator of the British Rallycross Championship and a longstanding organiser of SEMSEC events at the Lydden Hill circuit

RICHARD WEAVERS 1950-2006

Long-time superkart enthusiast who lost his life in a racing accident during the Walter Hayes Trophy-supporting event this November



ALL PICS: LAT ARCHIVE

OBITUARIES

JORG BASTUCK
1969-2006

Co-driver to Aaron Burkart in the Junior WRC died after being hit by another car while changing a wheel during Rally Catalunya

GUIDO DACCO
1942-2006

The Italian was a late starter in international racing, but competed at F3000 and Champ Car level, as well as top-line sportscars

PAUL DANA
1975-2006

Journalist-turned racing driver who died after a warm-up accident for the Indy Racing League series opener at Homestead in Miami

TOM DELANEY
1911-2006

Started racing in 1930 and competed up to the age of 95, still behind the wheel of the Lea-Francis in which he started out

EUGENE MARTIN
1915-2006

The Frenchman was among the starters in the inaugural world championship grand prix in 1950 driving a Lago-Talbot

SHEKHAR MEHTA
1945-2006

Legend of the African Safari Rally who went on to become one of the political prime movers in the World Rally Championship

MARK PORTER
1975-2006

Rising Australian V8 Supercar driver who suffered fatal injuries during a support race at Bathurst in October

MURRAY RAINEY
1917-2006

The legendary Australian, father of Joy, won his domestic F3 series three times as well as creating a successful line of karts

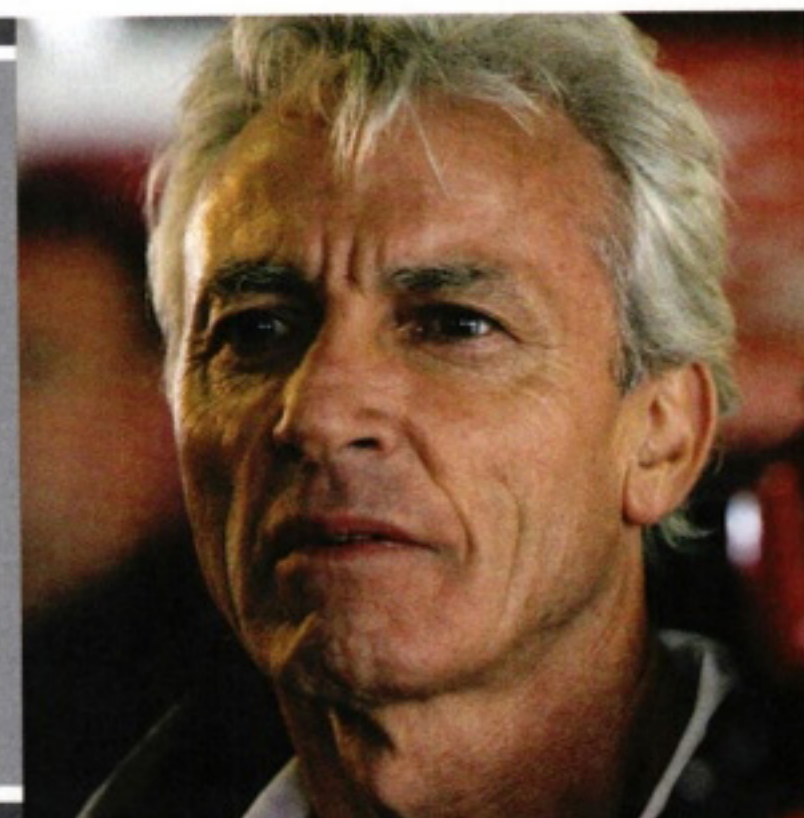
JOHNNY SERVOZ-GAVIN
1942-2006

French playboy racing driver who led the Monaco GP in a Matra in 1968, but retired in 1970 after suffering an eye injury

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN



Several great names have been lost to motorsport this year, not least of which was touring car legend Peter Brock (right). By JOHN SMAILES



In his quest for a 10th Bathurst win, Brock teamed up with John Cleland in 1993. They finished 17th after trouble with the propshaft



Three months after the death of Australia's motor racing legend Peter Brock, his 1974 Australian Touring Car Championship winning car has quietly been bought by a fan for \$500,000. The six-cylinder production Torana XU-1, unremarkable except for its Brock heritage, in an instant became the most expensive Holden ever sold. By comparison the fire-breathing Ford Mustang in which five-times national champion Ian 'Pete' Geoghegan (also deceased) won three of his titles, last year established an auction record of \$320,000. Brock's legend is only going to grow, the passion fuelled by the suddenness of his passing. When Peter Geoffrey Brock ringbarked a gumtree on September 8, 2006, it's fair to say a nation stopped.

Australia was already in shock. Just four days previously another popular hero – TV *Crocodile Hunter* Steve Irwin – had died after taking a stingray's barb in the heart. Outpourings of grief for Irwin were immense – rivalling coverage of the death of the Princess of Wales. Now Brock was dead.

The racing hero most synonymous with road safety, the bloke who carried the number 05 on his car to promote the blood-alcohol limit, the concerned citizen who gave time tirelessly to school lectures on driving courtesy, had died in a road accident. The irony did not escape commentators.

The crash, on a remote West Australian road on stage two of a gentleman's Targa event, unleashed a media frenzy. Helicopters above the site relayed live pictures to hastily assembled studio experts who forensically examined the scene on national (and international) TV... while his body was still in the car, for God's sake.

Brock was page one in all the nation's papers the next day – sometimes all of page one. *Death of a Champion*. Brock would have been surprised. Not that the race driver with the film star looks wasn't aware of his celebrity status. After all, he'd created it. But this was beyond anyone's expectation.

Perhaps it was the multiplier of Brock plus Irwin that created the intensity, or perhaps it was the manner of their deaths. Australians may in the main be urban dwellers but they reside in a large and dangerous land, and they live the legend. Stingrays, and gum trees on country roads, are natural predators. Proof positive: the two superheroes best equipped to combat those predators had been taken out by them.

Brock wouldn't have seen it that way. He grew up on a farm, the second of four brothers, and he spent his pre-licence years honing his skills in a self-built open-bodied Austin Seven special, skimming gum trees.

His father Geoffrey took young Peter to his first motor race before he became a teenager, but Brock had already been hooked. His formative years coincided with the great Round Australia Trials – trailblazing adventures around the continent's perimeter long before roads had been gazetted.

Brock couldn't wait. He used his two years of national service to build the spectacular Holden-engined Austin A30 special on government time. He also (in)formally wound back his age by two years, claiming that national service had stolen them from him.

Brock DNFed his first race, but was winning within months. Within a year, race promoter Alan Horsely had paid him

ALL PICS: GETTY IMAGES



'IT WAS A LICENCE TO MAKE MILLIONS NOT ONLY IN AUSTRALIA, BUT GLOBALLY'

Top to bottom:
Co-driver Doug Chivas ran out of fuel at Bathurst '73 – this car sold for \$500,000 at auction in '06; Brock raced at Le Mans three times; He won Bathurst by two laps in '75; Brock's Holden Dealer Team lives on as Holden Special Vehicles

← appearance money (\$400 an event and an exclusive contract to compete only at his circuit) to leave the backblocks of Victoria's Hume Weir circuit to race in front of 20,000 people at Sydney's Oran Park.

Another year and multiple Bathurst winner Harry Firth had drafted Brock and tyro Colin Bond into the fledgling Holden Dealer Team, a quasi-works effort ostensibly funded by a dealer group to get around GM's global no-race policy. Bond won Bathurst at his first outing. Brock had to wait another four years. But then he made up for it.

In the space of 15 years he won the world's toughest touring car race nine times – once on his own, six times with a designated co-driver and twice when he commandeered the team's Number Two car after his had failed.

In just 12 years he also won the Sandown 500/1000 long-distance race nine times, all of them with Holden. And although he captured three Australian Touring Car Championships, by no means matching Geoghegan, Bob Jane, Allan Moffat, Mark Skaife or Jim Richards, his record of 37 title event wins still stands, only this season equalled by Skaife. In a record 210 title starts he claimed 57 pole positions and was on the podium 100 times.

In 1979 he won the last great Round Australian Trial. He raced at Le Mans three times without success, placed second in the Spa 24 Hours with Gerry Marshall in a Vauxhall Viva, and headed a Holden Commodore Team that won the King's Cup in the 1986 World Touring Car Championship. He dominated Australian racing, becoming not only a motorsport legend but also a national folk hero.

He was the total package – a natural driver with superb mechanical empathy, an aggressive yet incredibly clean competitor, and a personality who amassed fans and sponsors. You could count Brock's total career crashes on the fingers of one hand, but his victories required an abacus. More than any other Australian race driver – Brabham included – he touched the public psyche.

Even when he transgressed, and he did so more often than his crafted PR admitted, his fans forgave him. In the mid 1970s, at arguably the peak of his powers, Brock attracted the sobriquet 'Peter Perfect'. Publicly it embarrassed him but privately he was delighted. It enabled him to access commercial potential well beyond the scope of any racing driver of the time.

While Alan Jones, Tim Schenken, Larry Perkins, Vern Schuppan *et al* followed the well-worn path to Europe, Brock chose to stay in Australia to pursue business opportunities beyond belief. He established Brock Special Vehicles and in a hugely advantageous deal with GM-Holden began taking Commodores off line, modifying them and then selling them in Holden dealerships with factory backing. It was a licence to make millions not only in Australia but globally. A master of PR, he arranged for journalists to drive Brock Commodores in Europe and the USA and their glowing comparative reports captured GM's international enthusiasm.

But then came the Energy Polarisiser – a Brock-devised home-made matchbox-sized container of magnets and crystals which he claimed imbued his vehicles with greater power, increased economy and enhanced handling. He wanted to fit them to his (read Holden's) vehicles. Keen to keep its relationship with Brock intact, the world's biggest car maker went to great efforts to conduct confirmation tests but to no avail. GM's engineers could find no merit in it.

Brock's response was that instruments to measure this new technology did not yet exist. When, at the beginning of 1987, warranty-shy Holden asked him not to proceed, Brock quit – losing the business and GM-Holden's racing support.

It was a huge price to pay. Now known as Holden Special Vehicles and owned jointly by Tom Walkinshaw and GM-Holden, the enterprise Brock started has achieved cumulative sales of 50,000 vehicles and is heading for a record 3500 deliveries in 2006. Despite the pressure Brock won his last Bathurst that year. He would not win Bathurst, Sandown or a touring car championship again.

Four years later, though, he was thrown a lifeline by new GM chief executive John Bagshaw. Supersalesman 'Bags' recognised Brock's immense appeal, apparently

untarnished by the Polariser affair and re-signed him to race and (more importantly) to promote Holden product.

The magic was still there, but arguably the touch wasn't quite so perfect. Suggestions of abused gearboxes and brakes never rose above a whisper in a paddock still respectful of the legend.

Returning from the funeral of motorcycle ace turned car racer Gregg Hansford (T-boned at Phillip Island in a two litre touring car event), a clearly distressed Brock was contemplative about his future: one more Bathurst win, a perfect 10, would round out his career.

In 1997 he made a last grab for the ring, driving with Mark Skaife, one of the young talents to whom he'd been of immense help and inspiration. He'd announced it would be his final Bathurst, hopefully his final win, and a huge crowd had turned up on the mound opposite his pit – there for Brock, not for the event. But halfway through, with Brock sitting in the pits nursing his ever present mug of herbal tea, the Commodore coasted to a halt at the top of the mountain. For maybe 10 minutes he sat there impassively, no expression on his face, except in those few minutes the light in his intense black eyes just seemed to go out.

Restless in retirement, Brock did race again, too often maybe, but he enjoyed it so much. He even won his 10th Bathurst – co-driving with three young guns in a massive seven-litre Holden Monaro in a 24-hour race. But it wasn't the 1000 and it really didn't count.

In 2004 Brock was again in the Bathurst 1000 pits when Jason Plato crashed their car before Brock could race it. In truth it was something of a relief. He'd qualified poorly and his pace at this level of competition wasn't there.

Subsequent outings included the Goodwood Festival and Revival meetings, the last in a purpose built early model 'humpy' Holden just a week before his death. There was also a series of Targa events, some with his stepson. James had been christened Brock, but his name was changed when his mum and Pete got together. He could hardly be Brock Brock.

The Brock legend continued to grow in his semi-retirement. Holden continued to use him as its public face. The Australian Olympic team embedded him in three successive Games villages as a master motivator and inspiration for all its young athletes. The Brock Foundation garnered substantial public support for disadvantaged children. Kids who'd never seen him race would queue for his autograph and the line would always be long because Brock would engage each of them in conversation.

Like many living legends, Brock's genius was occasionally flawed. His private life had often been in turmoil and his business affairs were from time to time not much better. A 2004 tell-all book by his long-time partner Beverley was followed by their separation. Just weeks after his death a lifestyle trash mag carried revelations by second wife Michelle of abuse that occurred during their marriage some quarter of a century previously.

His funeral was notable not only for the 1200 people who crammed in, and for 10,000 more who watched on superscreens in nearby Federation Square, but also for those who did not attend.

It's important, though, to keep perspective. Humility may not have been one of his early strong points, but increasingly humanity was. Just one example: Brock quietly left a sizeable cheque, more than he could afford, at the bedside of an impecunious friend suffering from cancer. Perhaps only a fraction of his life was 'troubled' – there's not many people in the public eye who can claim that.

His funeral was something special. Most of them were there: arch-rival Allan Moffat whose career Brock had saved, Bathurst co-driver Jim Richards, proteges Mark Skaife and Craig Lowndes, media commentator/co-driver Neil Crompton, Tim Schenken, Vern Schuppan...

When Brock's coffin, draped in the Australian flag, was carried from the cathedral the congregation was silent until the entourage, preceded by his daughter Alexandra carrying his helmet, reached the nave. That's where the fans had gathered – and when they burst into spontaneous and prolonged applause, the congregation followed suit. ❧

Top to bottom:
Brock's passing devastated the Australian sport community;
Racing at Spa with arch-rival Allan Harvey in '86;
Walking back to the pits after a breakdown in his 'humpy' Holden at Goodwood

'KIDS WHO'D NEVER SEEN PETER BROCK RACE WOULD QUEUE FOR HIS AUTOGRAPH'





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SEBASTIEN'S XSARA FILLIP

SEASON REVIEW Sebastien Loeb might have missed the final four events with a shoulder injury, but the Citroen star's eight wins and four seconds meant that he'd already done enough for a third straight world title. By DAVID EVANS



Let's be honest, this was never going to be a classic, was it? When Peugeot, Mitsubishi and Skoda walked out at the end of the previous season, they all wrote something on the wall. The message concerned 2006: it didn't look good. Putting the commercial implications of such a sizeable loss to one side, there was plenty to be cheerful about from a sporting perspective. Sebastien Loeb, for instance. He tackled the first 12 rallies at breakneck speed, then had the decency to break his arm, to keep everybody interested towards the end of the year. Let's hope the WRC's trough has bottomed and we're setting out to climb the next peak in 2007...

THE LOEB MACHINE

The Frenchman's pre-season talk about being enormously worried about his ability to get to grips with a World Rally Car fitted with mechanical front and rear differentials turned out to be utter nonsense. Okay, he slipped off the road on round one in Monte, possibly in a place where more electronic/hydraulic jiggery-pokery aboard the Xsara might have helped out, but after that he didn't put a wheel wrong for two days' flat-out driving through the Alps. Go figure.

Having had enough of finishing second after two rounds, he stepped his game up in Mexico and staged a belter of a fightback (against Petter Solberg) to win in Leon. That was the start of a five-rally winning streak which formed the basis of his third straight title. Chief title

rival, Ford's Marcus Gronholm, threw in the towel in Argentina, but Loeb was relentless. If he didn't win, he was second. He was the complete driver. A genius.

Then he got on his mountain bike. All the skill, dexterity and balance he has shown in a car – and on the parallel bars in his time as a gymnast – deserted him and he fell off. That kick-started the will he, won't he be back debate which raged until Gronholm upended his Focus in Australia rendering a Loeb return pointless. Ford's nightmare down under was the Frenchman's finest hour, at least in terms of winning world titles from home.

Loeb undoubtedly benefited from teething troubles for the new Ford but, at the same time, he had to get used to working with a new team on events himself. He did also have to get used to a new format of World Rally Car this season. It's true that he had only ever driven fully active cars, but Loeb's performance proved that these guys can drive anything.

His enforced absence from the final four rounds of the championship did provide one of the funniest moments of the sport. A video link was established between Perth and Geneva so the WRC media could talk to Loeb. We could see him, but he couldn't see us. He seemed to forget that the camera was on him all of the time and when his dog started barking, his gestures to wife Sandrine to silence the hound were enormously amusing.

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

As much as nobody really believed Loeb would struggle with the limited-grip Xsara, even fewer believed the Kronos Total Citroen team was anything other than a full factory outfit.

Between rallies, it was just that. The car went back to Paris and was fettled – and for the first eight months of the season developed – by Citroen Sport. During rallies, Loeb's car and a second, and usually third, Xsara were also run by Belgian team Kronos Racing, the firm which had managed Manfred Stohl's 2005 Xsara programme and the C2's of Dani Sordo and Kris Meeke in the same year. Citroen supplied a brace of '06-specification Xsara WRCs, as was required by the FIA to comply with the full manufacturer status of



Main: Loeb leapt to yet more records en route to his third straight title for Citroen

Left: Malcolm Wilson's M-Sport crew guided Ford to its first makes' title since 1979



the team. The manufacturers' entry fee was also funded by Citroen... You can see how it got confusing.

It was almost as though the Gauloises sponsorship was thrown in as some sort of red (shouldn't that be blue...) herring. The Kizz Me backing was just that. The energy drink manufacturer soon disappeared from the car when the cash, allegedly, failed to materialise. But then the red cars which had turned blue in January, turned red again in October. The fag money had only been for 13 rounds. So now the cars looked more factory than ever. Oh, and then there was the massive Citroen transporter that turned up in Felindre...

It's a shame that, in the middle of this debate, the great job completed by the Kronos team – particularly in Greece, where Loeb ripped off the back half of the Xsara and the Belgian boys rebuilt it overnight – went unrecognised. Team boss Marc van Dalen was at pains to point out that many of the people working on Loeb's Xsara began on the Peugeot 405 that Kronos first ran in the '95 Belgian Procar series.

Whatever, it's history now. And in addition to the world title Loeb delivered, van Dalen was also voted team principal of the year by the Professional Motorsport World Expo.

What did Petter Solberg think?

"Hey, Citroen is Citroen."

Hmm, still not sure he's convinced.

THE FORD FACTOR

There was none of that debate for Ford. The Blue Oval was a manufacturer and proud. And there was no one more proud than Malcolm Wilson when he finally stepped up to the palace in Monte Carlo to attend the finish ceremony as winning team principal. And Wilson's season would get better – victory in Sweden – before it got worse, courtesy of mechanical glitches and his drivers' occasional inability to fully assess and deliver the required speed in certain corners. Diplomatic enough?

Here's the rub. Ford won the manufacturers' title, fair enough. At the end of the day, it had to be done this season. The last time had been in 1979 and this year the competition was hardly at its fiercest. Ford faced a one-man Citroen outfit and the most lacklustre and out-of-sorts Subaru team in years. It came as a surprise to many that it took Ford as long as it did to clinch the title, which came on the penultimate round.

That was for three reasons. One, Loeb – the blighter was metronomic in his stacking up of points. Two, new Focus – bits will fall off new cars, fact. Three, Gronholm and Mikko Hirvonen tripped up and cost the team points. Is that fair on

Gronholm? Possibly not. He went off the road in Mexico, but what about Sardinia? He hit a rock on a 'weak' point on the underside of the car and could put the cause or effect argument to good use there. Then again, he was ultimately the architect of his own demise as a drivers' title protagonist when he rolled into the Outback in Murray North.

As time passes, how Ford did it will fade, but the fact will remain etched into rallying's history book: Ford was champion of the world in 2006.

WHAT'S THE CURE? NOBODY KNEW

Listen: "I try to laugh about it, cover it all up with lies. I try and laugh about it, hiding the tears in my eyes, 'cause boys don't cry. Boys don't cry."

When five blokes from Sussex got together, called themselves *The Cure*, and wrote Boys Don't Cry in 1979, little did they know their words would be so pertinent for a Norwegian called Solberg and a car called Subaru in the World Rally Championship in 2006.

The Subaru situation was so bad that Solberg was reduced to tears on more than one occasion this season. The introduction to this section of the review is perhaps a little flippant. It is not intended to detract from the efforts pumped into 2006 by every single SWRT team member. They worked their socks off all season. It's just they all appeared to be working in different directions.

In short, and as much as it will pain many to hear it, Subaru could do with a French lesson. Across the Channel, the engineers engineer and the drivers drive. Maybe it was the loss of engineering guru David Lapworth – who departed after two rounds – or the car. By the team's own admittance, the 2005 Impreza was far from their best work. And this year, from that already fairly low point, things nosedived. By now, everybody in Banbury will be sick and tired of hearing that this is the first season without a win since 1992. And no matter how you try and couch it, there simply wasn't an Impreza

Above: Manfred Stohl made his Peugeot 307 WRC fly on occasion

Below: Colin McRae was a welcome stand-in for Loeb in Turkey

Clockwise from top right: Henning Solberg had a tough year; Dani Sordo was fast but inconsistent; Gareth Machale scored points in Mexico; Marcus Gronholm's title challenge fizzled out in Australia



at the races this season. If the win had come, it would have been a fluke. All the effort in the world was never going to make it work, the team was trying to push water up hill.

In a way, it's a back-handed compliment to Subaru, that the world is up in arms the way it is about its performance. The WRC is not used to it. The WRC is used to Subaru winning six titles and having – as the team's enormously affable MD Richard Taylor pointed out – a driver in first or second in the drivers' title race for 11 of the last 13 years. The WRC needs a strong Subaru team. The Impreza is a worldwide icon, as is the Solberg smile. Let's hope both are back in 2007.

POPPED IN SOLD OUT

I know, how can I follow *The Cure* with *Wet, Wet, Wet* (popped in, souled out...)? Apologies. It won't happen again.

Anyway, given the limited number of full-time seats this season, there was always going to be a few WRC superstars popping in. Given that Toni Gardemeister was saying: "Another season at Ford will let me show what I can do," at the same time as his countryman Gronholm was saying: "Where do I sign?", the former was out of a job and in a private Peugeot in Monte Carlo.

When it comes to going quickly in unfamiliar surroundings, Gardemeister's pretty special, however. A third in New Zealand in 1999 first time out in a SEAT Cordoba WRC or fifth in Monte Carlo on his 206 debut in 2001 underline that fact. So, when he stepped aboard a 307 for the opener, nobody was surprised when he took the final podium spot. Unfortunately for Gardemeister, that would be his final outing until the summer, when he switched his allegiance across Paris and took a Citroen Xsara to fourth in Greece and Germany, before ending his year with fifth in Cyprus. If there had been one more paid slot this season, it would most likely have been Gardemeister's. In the end, he made a solid job of his quartet of rallies and would merit a return to the 'profession' in the

near future.

Fellow former Ford man, Francois Duval, was out on half the rounds in a Skoda Fabia WRC. His most impressive effort came early, however, when he was running an intermediate-specification Fabia in Monte Carlo. He overcame the evil handling to place the Fabia sixth at the end of leg one, having posted scratch and second quickest times. He binned it on day two, and that was really the story of Duval's season. There was lots of promise, but ultimately not that much to shout about. He was, however, way quicker than the Red Bull Skodas. The less said about them, the better.

The WRC was a poorer place without the charismatic Gigi Galli. The Italian appeared six times, clinching his maiden podium aboard a Pirelli-financed 307 in Argentina and sparking celebrations few will forget!

BRITS ABROAD

Ten years ago in Monte Carlo, Colin McRae started out driving a Subaru wearing number one on either side. This season, seeing those numbers alongside the Union flag felt a very long way away. It's pretty depressing, but it's the way it is. Without a massive cash influx, neither Kris Meeke nor Guy Wilks is going to make it. Now maybe, this is the way it should be. Neither could deny that they have had ample opportunity. Three years apiece in front-line Junior World Rally Championship machinery should have been enough, but they haven't. Who's failed who, though. Have the drivers missed the goal, or has the system failed them?

Meeke, it appears, has delivered a season too late. He has been fastest of the JWRC runners this season, but it was last year that he needed to beat Sordo. It was this year that Sordo beat him to the second official Citroen seat for next year. Meeke's speed has been tempered by two driving mistakes this year. At times, he appears to have an inability to throttle back and sit on a minute-plus lead. Equally, any team

principal will tell you the number one attribute they always want is the speed, they can teach the rest. Meeke deserves a shot at the WRC, but then would you take him over Gardemeister, Duval or Galli? Precisely.

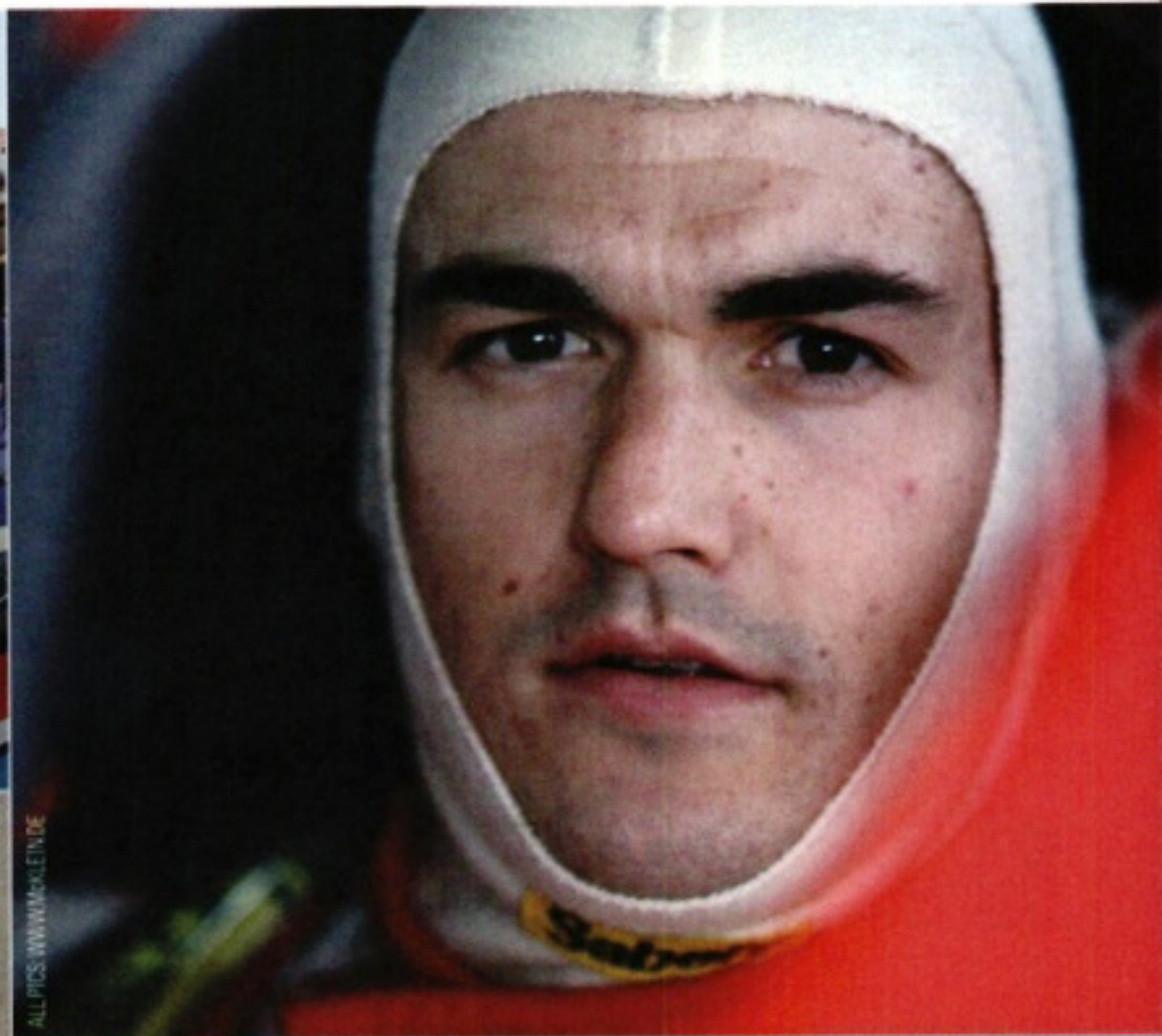
Wilks rode an emotional rollercoaster this season. He won rallies, he did the job Suzuki wanted him to do. He played the team game at times when he might have wanted to give it the gas and blitz the timesheets. He did all of this because of the World Rally Car-shaped carrot being dangled ahead of him by Suzuki. In the end, the carrot seems to have been eaten by somebody else. As I write and you read, Wilks has been released from his contract. In short, he's been taken in and spat out by Suzuki. He deserved more. He was faster than team-mate Per-Gunnar Andersson, but, even with the 2005 JWRC title under his belt, the Swede is in the same boat as Wilks. It's all been handled in a very un-Japanese way. Having taken these boys on, tutored them in the ways of rallying, then let them go shows a loss of face from the upper echelons of the Suzuki family. Strange.

And finally, there was Matthew Wilson. He arrived on the scene amid a flurry of headlines and media attention. He turned up in Monte Carlo in a car capable of winning the rally. But he was 18. In many ways, it was the ultimate teenage kick. But it turned out to be the watered down cover from Frenchies *Nouvelle Vague* rather than *The Undertones* more hardcore rock and roll version.

It's too early to judge Wilson – he's on a long-term deal. He was damned if he drove fast and binned it and damned if he took his time and learned the ropes. He ventured for the latter and only time will tell if it was a) the right option and b) if he's the man to take Britain onwards and upwards.

JUNIOR LUNACY

We all wanted an exciting climax to the season, but this was ridiculous. It was supposed to be exciting for the drivers in



TOP 10 DRIVERS

AUTOSPORT'S GUIDE TO THE YEAR'S MOVERS AND SHAKERS



➔ NO MOVE 1

SEBASTIEN LOEB
Twelve starts, 12 finishes—eight wins and four second places. As amazing a season from one of the fastest and most reliable drivers in the sport as has ever graced the world championship. Awesome.
GOOD COP Japan. Monster scrap, kicked Gronholm's butt
BAD COP Mountain bikes... don't go there



⬇ DOWN ONE 6

MANFRED STOHL
He's waited years for a full programme and, one sizeable Swedish roll aside, he made the most of it. Did as well as could be expected—and turned the 307 into a controllable, reliable rally car.
GOOD COP Pointing out that his baby daughter's inability to sit up straight was more interesting than any rally talk
BAD COP Binning his Peugeot 307 at the same corner as OMV team-mate Henning Solberg in Sweden



⬆ UP ONE 2

MARCUS GRONHOLM
Perfect start in Monte and Sweden. Just when he was starting to think about title number three, he bounced off the road in Mexico and his turbo fell off in Spain. Second it is, then.
GOOD COP Finland, inch-perfect again and perfect handbrake turn outside Grosvenor House Hotel for Autosport Awards
BAD COP Saying no to interviews after his Oz roll, then feeling bad about it and giving interviews



★ NEW ENTRY 7

XAVIER PONS
What a difference a couple of rallies made. Instead of coming to Japan, Pons went home. He came back on top form and beat Sordo on every remaining round of the series.
GOOD COP Admitting his head was finished after Finland and coming back twice the driver he'd been before
BAD COP Making his co-driver cry in Germany



⬆ UP ONE 3

DANI SORDO
Ignore the middle bit of his season, where he seemed to go a bit mad. Arrived in 2006 having never driven a World Rally Car in his life. Then proceeded to take reputations apart all over the shop.
GOOD COP Having fever for Autosport staff donuts in the middle of the road an hour after his retirement in Australia
BAD COP Taking his belts off in Japan when he was in the middle of a stage. I mean, what a criminal...



➔ NO MOVE 8

CHRIS ATKINSON
The highlights of Atko's season were probably the asphalt rounds, where he got to use last year's car! Found the 2006 version utterly unfathomable and elected to talk about magic shows instead.
GOOD COP Leading on pace—and looking, for a while at least, like he could win at home
BAD COP Trying to torch the Impreza WRC2006 in Australia, although there are some who might have thought that a good idea...



⬇ DOWN TWO 4

PETTER SOLBERG
Never stopped trying. Never gave up. Never looked like winning. Never found balance with the car. Never blamed anyone. Never put together a coherent sentence about what precisely was wrong with the car.
GOOD COP Japan. Desperately wanted to go home, but carried on smiling for his devoted fans
BAD COP Saying "it's part of the game" approximately 376,235 times during the season



★ NEW ENTRY 9

KRIS MEEKE
Never looked able to cope with Sordo in 2005, but came back this year and blitzed the JWRC. In terms of pace, he rocked. Is there any difference between the C2 and the Ignis? Who knows? A Clio won anyway!
GOOD COP His pace. When he was on it—and on the road—he was comfortably fastest
BAD COP Hitting Jari-Matti Latvala in Catalunya. Every driver before him managed to miss the Ford



⬆ UP FOUR 5

MIKKO HIRVONEN
Made good use of the best car, but he was forced to drive within himself too many times. Next season will show whether he's champion material.
GOOD COP Telling Malcolm Wilson to stay in NZ and enjoy the party while he went to GB and drove his own rally
BAD COP That rock in Wales. Cracking the cage robbed us of the scrap we'd waited all season for



★ NEW ENTRY 10

JUHO HANNINEN
Took the sport up later than most. He's 25, but he's another devilishly, and depressingly, fast Finn. Won Group N on his first two WRC outings in Sweden and Sardinia.
GOOD COP Monster drifts in a Group N car in Sweden. Awesome stuff
BAD COP Wearing the wrong underwear in Finland. Exclusion beckoned. Again, what a criminal...



Clock wise from top left: Patrik Sandell scooped the Junior world title at the last gasp; Nasser Al-Attiyah (right) was king of the Group N brigade; Francois Duval had the fastest Skoda – when he appeared; Kris Meeke's junior year took a dive

their cars, not for the drivers of the recovery trucks with the rally cars on the back. Patrik Sandell took the Junior World Rally title this season and that's what people will remember, not the way he did it – having crashed earlier in the final leg and only taken the title because he managed to get his broken Renault back to Cardiff before seven in the evening. The rally had been over for hours by then. In many ways, it was a fitting end to a bizarre (I was going to say shambolic, but thought that a little harsh) year where title-challenging drivers avoided each other for half the season. There were some great moments, wicked battles and tremendous driving along the way but, as far as I'm concerned, P-G Andersson won the title in Turkey. In the end, he was booted out for receiving outside assistance. Still, better a six-way title shoot-out on the final round than having the crown handed out on the penultimate rally...

A QUALITY PRODUCTION

Was it? Possibly. Outgoing champion Toshi Arai remained the fastest driver, but a combination of mechanical troubles and the odd driver-related incident meant no back-to-back wins for him. That's not to take anything away from Nasser Al-Attiyah, who was a deserving champion. The Subaru driver showed pace when he had to and a canny knack for getting the car around when he absolutely needed to. Japan's Fumio Nutahara stuck his oar in here and there and, had it not been for a Mexican exclusion, he might have had more to say come the end of the season. Mirco Baldacci and Jari-Matti Latvala would – in terms of speed – also have been worthy champions. Instead they had to take third and fourth respectively.

WHAT'S AROUND THE CORNER?

There's a genuine feeling of optimism around the sport. Citroen will be back officially, which is great, providing there's some stability and long-term commitment from



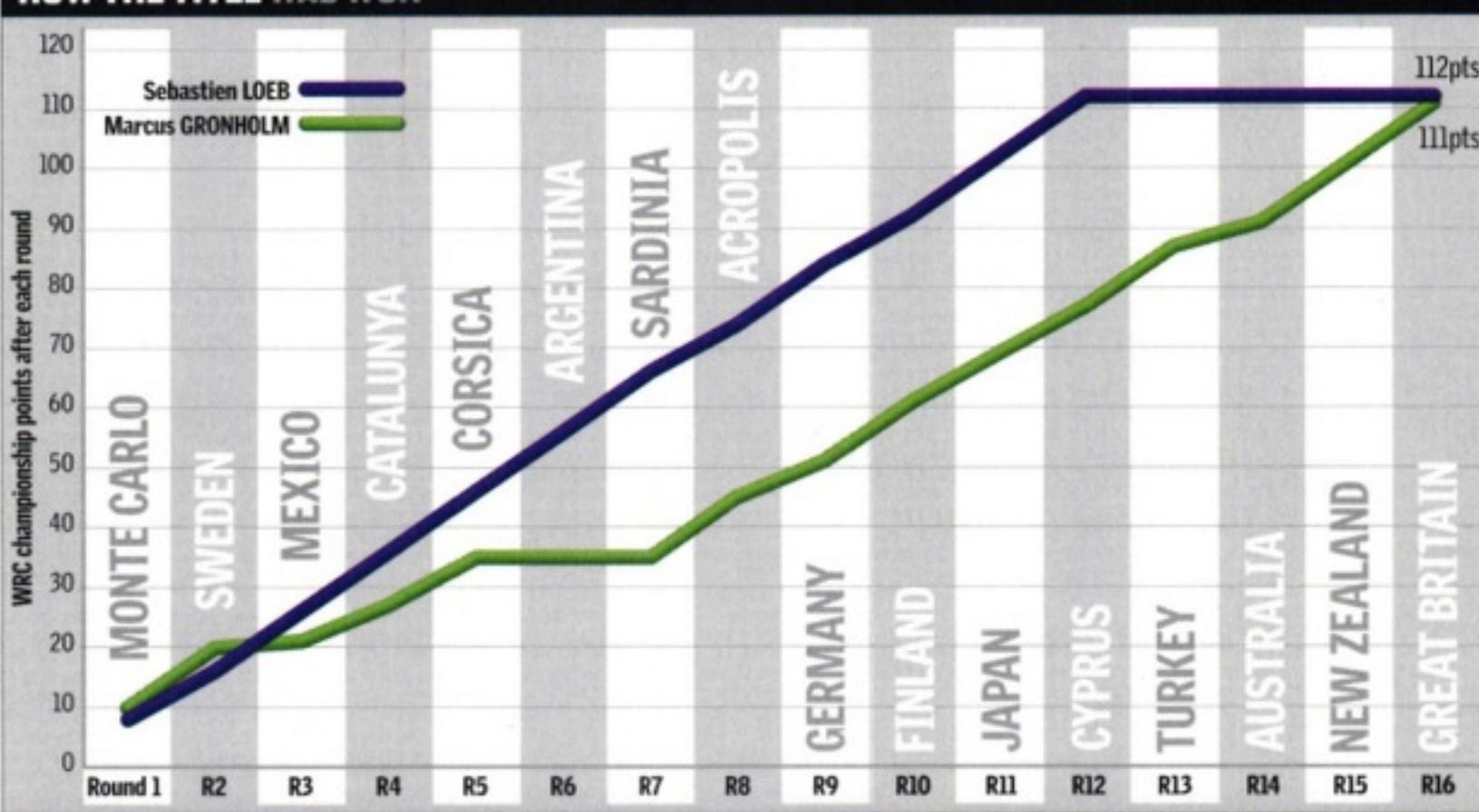
Versailles. Obviously, WRC is there to serve its customers and Citroen Sport, along with the other manufacturers, is a customer. But, participation comes with a responsibility to the sport. We all want and need a strong WRC. So we all have to put something back into the sport. Coming along with a car which has had millions of Euros invested in it and cleaning up is fantastic news for Citroen and Loeb, but when the former departs after just a few years, it leaves a very big hole.

To that end, incoming Rallies Commission president Morrie Chandler has to be applauded in his efforts to cut costs and to cut teams' ability and requirement to spend money. Chandler's not going to please everybody – certainly, the way the six-engine rule has been translated from what was on the drawing board to what will be put into practice is far from what the teams wanted, but it's a step in the right direction.

Commercially, David Richards and his ISC firm have put together a classic deal with sports marketing firm Sportfive. This can only be good news for the television networking of the championship and should be a springboard for the WRC. We have, and I know I'm biased, the best sport in the world, but at times I feel it's almost as though we're embarrassed by it. For goodness' sake, get out and watch the damned cars if and where you can. The world might not have been smiling this season, but the best rally cars in the world trying to escape the control of the best drivers in the world still makes for captivating viewing.

Maybe I'm being the eternal optimist here, but I really think we've turned a corner. Here's to a mega-competitive 2007. ☒

HOW THE TITLE WAS WON



Marcus Gronholm held the early advantage after wins in Monte Carlo and Sweden, before Sebastian Loeb streaked ahead with a five-win run. Gronholm came perilously close to catching the absent Frenchman in the last four rounds of the season

2006 World Rally Championship

Pos	Driver (nationality)	Team	Car	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
1	Sebastian Loeb (F)	Kronos Total Citroen	Xsara WRC	2nd	2nd	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	1st	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	112
2	Marcus Gronholm (FIN)	BP Ford World Rally	Focus WRC 06	1st	1st	8th	3rd	2nd	10th	RTD	1st	3rd	1st	2nd	2nd	1st	5th	1st	1st	111
3	Mikko Hirvonen (FIN)	BP Ford World Rally	Focus WRC 06	7th	12th	14th	9th	4th	RTD	2nd	3rd	9th	3rd	3rd	3rd	2nd	1st	2nd	RTD	65
4	Manfred Stohl (A)	OMV Peugeot Norway	307 WRC	4th	18th	3rd	11th	7th	4th	7th	17th	5th	9th	5th	4th	8th	3rd	3rd	2nd	54
5	Dani Sordo (E)	Kronos Total Citroen	Xsara WRC	8th	16th	4th	2nd	3rd	5th	3rd	6th	2nd	RTD	EXC	RTD	7th	23rd	5th	7th	49
6	Petter Solberg (N)	Subaru World Rally Team	Impreza WRC2006	RTD	RTD	2nd	7th	11th	2nd	9th	7th	RTD	RTD	7th	8th	13th	2nd	6th	3rd	40
7	Xavier Pons (E)	Kronos Total Citroen	Xsara WRC	9th	7th	RTD	RTD	6th	17th	4th	8th	14th	RTD	DNE	7th	4th	4th	4th	5th	32
8	Henning Solberg (N)	OMV Peugeot Norway	307 WRC	RTD	8th	5th	DNE	DNE	7th	RTD	5th	DNE	4th	DNE	6th	3rd	RTD	12th	11th	25
9=	Toni Gardemeister (FIN)	PH Sport	Xsara WRC	3rd	RTD	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	4th	4th	DNE	DNE	5th	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	20
9=	Chris Atkinson (AUS)	Subaru World Rally Team	Impreza WRC2006	6th	11th	7th	11th	13th	6th	10th	11th	8th	13th	4th	9th	6th	9th	RTD	6th	20
11	Gianluigi Galli (I)	Mitsubishi Ralliart/Bozian	Lancer WR 05/307 WRC	RTD	4th	DNE	DNE	9th	3rd	RTD	DNE	DNE	5th	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	15
12=	Alexandre Bengue (F)	Bozian Racing	307 WRC	DNE	DNE	DNE	4th	5th	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	9
12=	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)	Private/Stobart VK M-Sport	Impreza WRX/Focus WRC04/06	40th	DNE	25th	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	22nd	DNE	DNE	69th	DNE	DNE	6th	8th	4th	9
14=	Kosti Katajamaki (FIN)	Stobart VK M-Sport	Focus WRC 04/06	DNE	6th	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	RTD	26th	DNE	14th	DNE	DNE	5th	DNE	DNE	DNE	7
14=	Jan Kopecky (CZ)	Czech Rally Team Skoda	Fabia WRC	11th	13th	DNE	5th	10th	DNE	17th	16th	7th	8th	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	10th	7
16=	Daniel Carlsson (S)	Mitsubishi Ralliart	Lancer WRC 05	DNE	3rd	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	RTD	DNE	DNE	RTD	DNE	RTD	RTD	6
16=	Jussi Valimaki (FIN)	Mitsubishi Ralliart	Lancer WRC 05	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	5th	9th	DNE	7th	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	6
16=	Stephane Sarrazin (F)	Subaru World Rally Team	Impreza WRC2006	5th	DNE	DNE	8th	8th	DNE	DNE	RTD	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	6
19	Francois Duval (B)	First Motorsport	Fabia WRC	DNE	DNE	DNE	6th	RTD	DNE	8th	13th	RTD	DNE	DNE	DNE	9th	DNE	DNE	8th	5
20	Thomas Radstrom (S)	Rally Team Olsbergs	Impreza WRC	DNE	5th	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	DNE	4

Key to rallies: 1 Monte Carlo Rally, Jan 20-22; 2 Swedish Rally, Feb 3-5; 3 Rally Mexico, Mar 3-5; 4 Catalunya Rally, Mar 24-26; 5 Tour de Corse, Apr 7-9; 6 Rally Argentina, Apr 28-30; 7 Rally d'Italia, May 19-21; 8 Acropolis Rally, Jun 2-4; 9 Rally Deutschland, Aug 11-13; 10 Rally Finland, Aug 18-21; 11 Rally Japan, Sep 1-3; 12 Cyprus Rally, Sep 22-24; 13 Rally Turkey, Oct 13-15; 14 Rally Australia, Oct 27-29; 15 Rally New Zealand, Nov 17-19; 16 Rally Great Britain, Dec 1-3. Points system: 10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1. DNE: did not enter.

21= Toshihiro Arai (J), Subaru Impreza WRX, 3; 21= Gareth Machale (GB), Ford Focus RS WRC04, 3; 21= Andreas Aigner (AUT), Skoda Fabia WRC, 3; 21= Janne Tuohino (FIN), Citroen Xsara WRC, 3; 21= Kristian Sohlberg (FIN), Subaru Impreza WRC, 3; 26= Luis Perez Companc (RA), Ford Focus WRC 04, 2; 26= Mirco Baldacci (I), Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX, 2; 28= Matthew Wilson (GB), Ford Focus WRC 04/06, 1; 28= Fumio Nutahara (J), Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX, 1; 28= Dean Herridge (AUS), Subaru Impreza WRX, 1



HIGGINS MARK

SEASON REVIEW Manxman Mark Higgins added Group N success to his Formula 2

f 2006 marked a new dawn for the British Rally Championship, then it came with a few clouds on the horizon. This year was supposed to be very different to last, when Mark Higgins ran away with the title, and it was: this time he was chased for it first and then ran away with it...

Some sweeping rule changes for 2006 meant the World Rally Cars that once dominated the BRC were outlawed to make way for less-expensive Group N machinery at the front. The idea was to level the competition and bring in new blood. And it worked. Sort of.

The major problem with rallying at the moment is the lack of money within it and, to be fair to the BRC, that's a problem that is being felt at every level, not just the supposed pinnacle of national rallying. So you have to give credit to BRC boss Mark Taylor and organiser Rally UK Ltd for trying to improve matters, although there are still lessons to be learned.

THE CHAMPION

Right, the easy bit first. Mark Higgins is a brilliant driver, the best the BRC has right now and in 2006 he became champion for the second year in succession and the third in total. Suppose there were rally talent scouts who went to BRC rounds in search of the next Colin McRae or Richard Burns. Well, I imagine they'd probably spend a fair chunk of their time being sidetracked and following Higgins's exploits instead.

This year was a little different for Mark because, as previously stated, he didn't have it all his own way. And that was something you sensed he relished. When Higgins won his second British title last year he was virtually unbeatable. Armed with his weapon of choice, a Ford Focus WRC, he'd soon dispatched the (very small) army of gentleman drivers who could afford similarly powered cars, being the true pro that he is.

A Group N Subaru Impreza, backed once more by trucking magnate Eddie Stobart but run by Morgan Motorsport, may not have been his ideal mode of rally transport this year, but Higgins was still the man to catch. And he was caught on occasion. First by Ryan Champion in a works-backed Mitsubishi on the season-opening Pirelli Rally, although that was after Higgins's rally had been blighted by late punctures. Then, remarkably, he was matched down to the last tenth of a second by Rory Galligan in the sister Mitsubishi Motors UK Lancer on the Jim Clark, but got the nod by virtue of being fastest on the first stage. Of course Manxman Mark was in a league of his own back on home soil, but fast-forward to the Ulster Rally and he was beaten again, this time by fellow BRC veteran Gwyndaf Evans in a Lancer run by the new Hankook SJR squad. So was he upset by these results? No way – like any good sportsman he loves a good fight.



Left: Mark Higgins made another splash on his way to a third British title

Above: Series veteran Gwyndaf Evans, who took the title in '96, won in Ulster

Below: Ryan Champion took three outright victories but lost out to Higgins

Bottom: Guy Wilks dovetailed JWRC and BRC action and flew in the S1600 Suzuki



KS TIME

and WRC titles in Britain. by GILLIAN BELL

After Ulster, Higgins played a sensible championship game in Yorkshire where he finished second again to Champion to wrap up the title. What's that, I hear you say? Higgins played a sensible championship game and didn't go all-out for the win? Yes, well maybe, but by that stage he was close to securing a deal to contest the final round, Wales Rally GB, in... you've guessed it – a Focus WRC.

It was a shame to lose Higgins for the grand finale but it's looking likely that he'll be back in the BRC next year, gunning for an unprecedented third straight title. If the world championship can't find a place for such talent, then we'll gladly hang on to him.

HIS FOLLOWERS

While the BRC didn't really have the quantity it sought this year, it certainly had quality. There was obviously more than

one man to challenge Higgins at the top, so let's start with title runner-up Champion. The Yorkshireman arrived in the BRC by virtue of winning last year's Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge, a series that also joined the BRC this year (and struggled for the same recognition it got in the rival ANCRO series). Champion teamed up with Galligan in works-backed Lancers, forming a strong pairing. But Mitsubishi's hopes of landing that coveted British title were not to be. Galligan's season was curtailed by illness, while Ryan's bright start didn't last. Retirements on the Isle of Man and Ulster seriously dented his title challenge, although the fact remains that he won more rounds than any other driver, even if his last win on Rally GB was scored under SuperRally rules. Now we wait to see if he retains his drive for next year.

Another strong pairing came in the shape of Evans and young hotshot Stuart Jones at Hankook SJR. Evans was an

experienced pair of hands who secured the team's first victory in Ulster, while fellow Welshman Jones gained in experience and led a round for the first time in Yorkshire. Tragically for him he thought he'd won the BRC class on Rally GB when Champion failed to finish, only to find out he was in fact second. Jones is now planning a step up to international competition, while Evans will definitely be back in the BRC after winning this year's Evo Challenge.

Of the seven former British champions who drove on the Pirelli, Jonny Milner was the only other one to stick around for the season. Running his own team meant the title was always going to be a big ask, but Milner did challenge Evans for the Mitsubishi prize and his consistency was rewarded with third in the overall points.

Julian Reynolds was no match for team-mate Higgins, although he was among the top BRC runners on Rally



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TOP 6 DRIVERS

AUTOSPORT'S GUIDE TO THE YEAR'S MOVERS AND SHAKERS



NO MOVE **1**

MARK HIGGINS

So, the competition was a lot closer this season and he only won two rounds, but Higgins was still the man. Relished having more of a fight on his hands and showed barely a chink in his armour en route to a third British title.

GOOD COP Untouchable on the Isle of Man again and only just missed out on a podium finish against WRC machinery

BAD COP Dropped the BRC for the chance of a WRC ride on Rally GB. But then again he had earned it...



NEW ENTRY **4**

GWYNDAF EVANS

The 1996 British champion's wealth of rallying experience made him something of a guru for the new Hankook Rally Team. Slugged it out

with Higgins to give his jubilant crew a first win in Ulster and then went and bagged himself a works-backed Mitsubishi drive for 2007.

GOOD COP The BRC is trying to promote young talent, so 47-year-old Evans wins the Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge. Classic!

BAD COP Winning Challenge under SuperRally after retiring in Rally GB



NEW ENTRY **2**

GUY WILKS

There was a country mile between Wilks and the rest of the Super 1600 field, and his car was older than the two Stobart Fiesta drivers. Would have been

class champion but for engine dramas on the Pirelli and missing Ulster.

GOOD COP Second only to Higgins in the BRC points on the Isle of Man. Brilliant effort

BAD COP Reminding us at every event that his Suzuki Ignis was not as powerful as the Group N machinery. Yes, Guy, we know!



NEW ENTRY **5**

STUART JONES

The BRC's brightest young hope could have been a two-time winner but for some cruel twists of fate. Led an international rally for the first time

in Yorkshire, only for a brake calliper to shear off his Hankook Lancer. Then looked to have victory in the bag on Rally GB, only for Champion to claim the spoils under SuperRally rules.

GOOD COP Got quicker through the year. Definitely one to watch

BAD COP His 90mph roll on the Isle of Man. Ouch!



NEW ENTRY **3**

RYAN CHAMPION

Actually won more BRC rounds than any other driver, with three victories, including two against Higgins. Loses out to the top two by virtue of a mid-season dip, in which he crashed out of the Isle of Man and Ulster. Still a worthy championship runner-up.

GOOD COP That first international win against seven former British champions on the Pirelli, plus victory at home in Yorkshire

BAD COP Crashing in Ulster; winning under SuperRally on Rally GB



NO MOVE **6**

JAMES WOZENCROFT

There he was in his first year in S1600, struggling to get to grips with his Suzuki Ignis and not bothering the competition. Then, after building

some points, he has a blinding run on Rally GB and nick the class title!

GOOD COP That Rally GB drive. Fought for third in Junior WRC after being granted a wildcard entry

BAD COP Again, GB. Lost places with a final stage puncture, after which he delayed Group N leader Anton Alen in the test. Whoops!

Below left:
Barry Clark
tried hard in the
Stobart Fiesta

Below right:
Jonny Milner
ran Gwyndaf
Evans close in
the Mitsubishi
Evo Challenge



2006 British Rally Championship

Pos	Driver (co driver/s)	Car	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
1	Mark Higgins (Rory Kennedy)	Subaru Impreza WRX	2nd	1st	1st	2nd	2nd	DNE	135
2	Ryan Champion (Craig Thorley)	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9	1st	3rd	0	20th	1st	1st	116
3	Jonny Milner (Nicky Beech)	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9	5th	16th*	3rd	6th	3rd	15th	93
4	Gwyndaf Evans (Huw Lewis)	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9	3rd	0	19th	1st	4th	12th	86
5	Julian Reynolds (Gordon Noble/Alun Cook)	Subaru Impreza WRX	8th	DNE	5th	5th	13th	4th	85
6	Conrad Rautenbach (David Senior)	Subaru Impreza WRX	10th	6th	4th	DNE	6th	13th	81
7	Guy Wilks (Phil Pugh)	Suzuki Ignis S1600	20th	4th	2nd	DNE	7th	10th	80
8	Stuart Jones (Craig Parry)	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9	9th	5th	0	4th	0	2nd	79
9	Phillip Morrow (Daniel Barritt/Chris Patterson)	Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9	6th	20th*	9th	17th	5th	9th	74
10	Rob Swann/Darren Garrod	Subaru Impreza WRX	19th	9th	8th	7th	10th	0	67

Rounds: 1 Pirelli International Rally (Carlisle), May 13-14; 2 Jim Clark International Rally (Kelso), July 7-8; 3 Rally Isle of Man (Douglas), August 3-5; 4 Ulster International Rally (Armagh), September 1-2; 5 Trackrod Rally Yorkshire (Pickering), October 7; 6 Wales Rally GB (Cardiff), December 1-3

Points system: 30-25-22-20-19 for the top five finishers. A point is deducted for every finisher thereafter, down to one point for the driver/co-driver in 23rd place. Asterisks denote dropped scores. Five best scores count towards total.

GB. Another youngster, Phillip Morrow, probably benefited from a season of driving against more experienced rivals and also chased the Evo Challenge. Zimbabwean Conrad Rautenbach was the highest-placed of a fleet of Geoff Jones-run Impreza drivers with sixth in the points.

AND THE REST

The Super 1600 ranks positively swelled this year – not hard considering Brian O'Mahony was the only contender in 2005. He stood little chance of defending his title in an ageing Ford Puma, and that was before you considered Junior WRC frontrunner Guy Wilks's presence. Wilks admittedly used this year's BRC as a chance to keep match-fit in between JWRC rounds, but in doing so he demonstrated a yawning gap to the rest of the competition. There's talent out there, but it's some way off Wilks's level yet.

A well-driven S1600 car can be a match for Group N machinery in the right conditions, and Wilks proved as much by finishing second only to Mark Higgins on the Isle of Man. JWRC rival Kris Meeke also starred when he brought a Citroen C2 to Ulster.

Wilks, running a self-funded campaign, missed the Ulster Rally and therefore the chance to put his name on the class trophy. That honour fell to 'team-mate' James Wozencroft. Both drove Suzuki Ignis machines, albeit run by different outfits. Reigning Stars of the Future champion Wozie was on a steep learning curve but improved during the season, before starting Rally GB, where he gained a wildcard entry for JWRC and ran as high as third.

The other S1600 competition consisted of two Ford Fiestas driven by WRC outcast Roman Kresta and reigning BRC Production champion Barry Clark. From the start Kresta had the look of a man who wasn't quite sure how it had come to this, and he fared less well with the mechanical dramas that besieged the Fiesta. Clark, who also ran a JWRC and Fiesta Sporting Trophy campaign, kept plugging away and, although he didn't land the S1600 crown, he was top JWRC rookie.

There wasn't much support in the other classes, which must be something of a worry for Taylor. Justin Dale worked hard for class R2 results in an Autosport Technology-run Renault Clio, but ultimately lost out on points to Matt Beebe in an MGZR, even though Beebe was not a match on times. Finn McCaul won class R1 as the only competitor.

SO WHAT NOW?

By and large the switch to a Group N format has worked for the BRC and it just needs greater numbers for it to really take off. Which brings us back to the problem of money. But there is another potential spanner in the works. Earlier this year it was announced that Pirelli will be the sole tyre supplier for the BRC in 2007, scuppering the tyre sponsorship deals that many drivers rely on. The move has ruffled a fair few feathers and can't sit well with the Hankook team, which is of course bankrolled by the Korean tyre firm. Taylor has maintained that teams like Hankook could still run cars in the BRC, but using Pirelli tyres instead. Yeah, right...

The set-up of the championship is questionable too. Reducing the series from eight rounds to six was almost inevitable with the Welsh and Scottish Rallies struggling financially. Plus, the Tempest Stages never seemed to be that well-attended. Some classic events remain, but three of those – the Jim Clark, Isle of Man and Ulster rallies – are also rounds of the Irish Tarmac Championship, a series that still allows the spectacular World Rally Cars, which of course score outright wins. How are rally fans supposed to ignore these machines and their colourful drivers and just focus on the BRC runners? The answer, of course, is that they can't. Rally GB as the season finale brought its own dilemmas, too. Yes, the BRC crews got much greater exposure, but they were somewhat lost down the field, and it didn't help matters that the title had already been decided.

Still, there are changes to look forward to. Next year will bring the introduction of Super 2000 machinery to the British championship, and there is a lot of interest – and new investment – across the sport in that particular category. The BRC also likes to wear a green hat – the series is backed by Tesco and uses its 99 Octane gas as the control fuel for the championship – and as such will run a new Diesel Cup next year. Among the first to sign up is leading British Touring Car team Triple Eight, which is building a new Astra to run in the series. Funnily enough Mark Higgins has voiced a lot of interest in that machinery. Now wouldn't that be a match made in heaven (and hell for everyone else)?



**"THE VANTAGE IS NOT
A CAR FOR THE LADIES.
WE WANT IT TO RIVAL
THE PORSCHE GT3"**

FREDERIC DOR



RALLYING TO THE CAUSE

Aston Martin wants to be like Porsche used to be – enter Prodrive. By DAVID EVANS

Aston and Martin. Two words that in combination make your average racing fan go weak at the knees. Rally and car. Two more words at which the same species recoil in horror at the idea of dirty doors, more than one person in the car and some bizarre concept involving not going around in circles.

Combine the two to make four words – Aston Martin rally car – and it's hard to know what's going to happen. Until the Prodrive aspect is thrown in. Add a touch of Frederic Dor and everything starts to make sense. Dor, an immensely successful businessman, major motorsport fan and gentleman sportscar racer, felt the Aston Martin Vantage road car was missing something. He wanted to put that right. Having partnered Prodrive in the DBR9 race programme, he renewed the association to take Aston to the stage. This time, though, it was with the V8 Vantage rather than the DB9 as a base car.


Dor talked to former Porsche guru, now chairman and CEO of Aston Martin, Dr Ulrich Bez about the Vantage. Dor says the pair share a vision. "We want to make Aston the Porsche of 30 years ago," he explains. "Now we have the DBR9 on the track, but we also need a rally car – and that's the V8 Vantage."

It all makes perfect sense to Dor. And, after talking to him for five minutes, it makes perfect sense all round.

"I knew somebody who bought a Vanquish for himself, a DB9 for his son and a V8 Vantage for his wife," says Dor. "That's not right. The Vantage is not a car for the ladies. We want the V8 Vantage to rival the Porsche GT3. People say the GT3 is the best in the world; we want that to be the Vantage. That's why we've taken it to rallying."

The Vantage is hardly a hairdresser's car, but you kind of know where he's going with this. It's about people's perception of a car that is essentially – as incongruous as it sounds – the entry-level Aston Martin. So, the Rally GT was born. The car retains much of its road-going nature; with a 4.3-litre motor churning out 425bhp and 440Nm of torque, why wouldn't you? With 355mm discs and four-pot calipers clinging to them out front, why wouldn't you? The standard specification sheet goes on and on with reasons to go rallying.

Dor adds a couple of his own. "When we can make this car perfect on the stage, then we know it is going to be perfect on the road," he says. "And as well as that, we have to provide people who own this car with the chance to use it. There is no sport on the road any more. If you have some sport on the road then you are a criminal. The track is nice, but the rally and the stage is the perfect place for the gentleman driver and the serious enthusiast. The Vantage can be perfect for this. It is so versatile. You can finish your rally and then drive the car to the office. I did the Mont Blanc rally in this car. It was better balanced than the Porsche, it felt fantastic. It's not such a big car, you know. Compared with the Group N Subaru or Mitsubishi it is good, even for the width and it's very safe to drive."

Okay, that's enough. With those words ringing in my ears, it's down to business. A brace of Aston Martin Rally GTs are 

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Above: Author Evans puts on his racing face

Inset: With this many cubes, who needs a turbo?

lined up with the keys in. It's impossible to resist. Bill Gwynne knows more about driving and teaching the driving of rally cars than almost anybody else in the known world; he's well versed in being a patient passenger. I'm riding shotgun with him before roles are reversed. The stage – a muddy, rain-lashed, slick-shod slither of asphalt through Cornbury Park – lies in wait. There's a handful of 90s as the road jinks this way and that around the outbuildings before a stretch of moorland-esque road complete with a couple of medium-speed sweepers, a compression and a muddy handbrake at the end of the road before it's back the way we've just come.

The Aston trundles out, docile as you like, before Gwynne gets on the gas. He piles on the lock through the square corners, before the car seems to squat through the faster bends. He's feathering the throttle between third and fourth; it's solid and – as Dor said – safe. Now it's my turn.

As much as Dor and Prodrive want to make this a rally car, it remains an Aston Martin. If any rally car could ever be described as aristocratic, this is it. There's none of the stripped-out vulgarity or LED-flashing neon nonsense found among the current crop. The average World Rally Car is positively nouveau riche alongside the stately Vantage.

Equally, off the line there's none of that pinned to the back of the seat business one usually associates with a Prodrive-built rally machine. The gearbox remains standard (although a dog box option is available), and there's no question of a spark-cut for the flat shift. The nice, short leather gearlever remains unmolested. There's no launch control and anti-lag would be largely redundant since there's no turbo. If you're after all that electro wizardry, forget it. The Vantage is not for you.

If you're after a boomer of an engine, a bootful of power, a mountain of torque and an armful of oppo, you've met your match. The Vantage is deeply beautiful inside. It's a tad tight as you slide in through the door bars, but as you sink into the seat, you lean on some padded leather cushions on the centre console. This car doesn't do discomfort. The dash is standard, which means it's tasteful, crafted and quality. And right in the middle of the dash is the starter button. While the car might look standard inside, the noise is way, way beyond the norm. There's a moment's manic whine before the rumbling begins. It's the sort of rumble that comes from deep within. With provocation, it becomes a thunderous bellow.

The clutch is a delight and – although we've only just got out of the 'service park' – I'm feeling confident and safe. The

opening square corners are pre-empted by a slick second to first shift and a few revs. The back end of the car is clearly keen, largely owing to the combination of road tyres, rain, mud and leafy asphalt.

Still feeling safe, we're away and into the more open part of the stage. Having bounced off the rev limiter in first, the car is happy to do the same in second. There's the tiniest of curves to the left and the luscious, standard Aston 'box slices across the gate into third. The car feels solid.

Whoa, there. The right rear has dropped off the road and, for a nanosecond (okay, maybe a bit longer), I had no idea what was going on and even less of an idea about how to control it. Gwynne's seen it all before.

"She's quite wide and the road's quite narrow," he says, before resuming his pace note calls. That's enough for now. I take a much more sedate approach to the sweepers, but do manage – courtesy of the hydraulic handbrake – to spin the car in readiness for the return journey.

Having come through unscathed, my confidence is rising again. The car gives confidence. It feels progressive – a trait the modern WRC driver might call laziness – but the precision

from the steering is wonderful and the brakes are more than up to the job. A set of Eibach springs and adjustable EXE-TC dampers give the car fabulous poise and balance in the corners.

Or at least they did until my second moment of the day, braking for a right-hander. The car skipped and once again eluded my control. Somehow it sorted itself out and – once again – Gwynne didn't even flinch. All too soon my time in the car is over. As we cross the finish line, a mid-right-hander – all I want to do is bury the throttle and take the flag in a fabulous drift and cacophony of booming V8-ness. I think better of it. Mentioned in the Domesday Book, the house at Cornbury Park has been around since the 14th century and is believed to be preferable without a Vantage-shaped hole in its frontage. I console myself with dipping the clutch and blipping the throttle. Stunning.

This car has already contested numerous events in the French Rally Championship, piloted by Stephane Sarrazin among others. It's turned plenty of heads on that side of the channel and could do the same over here.

The Aston Martin Rally GT comes in at around the same price as a full-spec Group N Impreza. They're utterly different rally cars, but they are both rally cars.

Now, a slippery Cornbury Park is one thing, let's see who's man enough to give the Aston the large one over Deer's Leap on a wet Saturday afternoon... ■



TECH SPEC

ASTON MARTIN RALLY GT

ENGINE	4300cc turbocharged
POWER	425bhp
TORQUE	440Nm
TRANSMISSION	6-speed synchro (dog gearbox available)
BRAKES	355mm discs, 4-pot caliper
SUSPENSION	Independent double wishbone, adjustable dampers
PRICE	£120,000 (approx)



SUBARU IMPREZA WRX

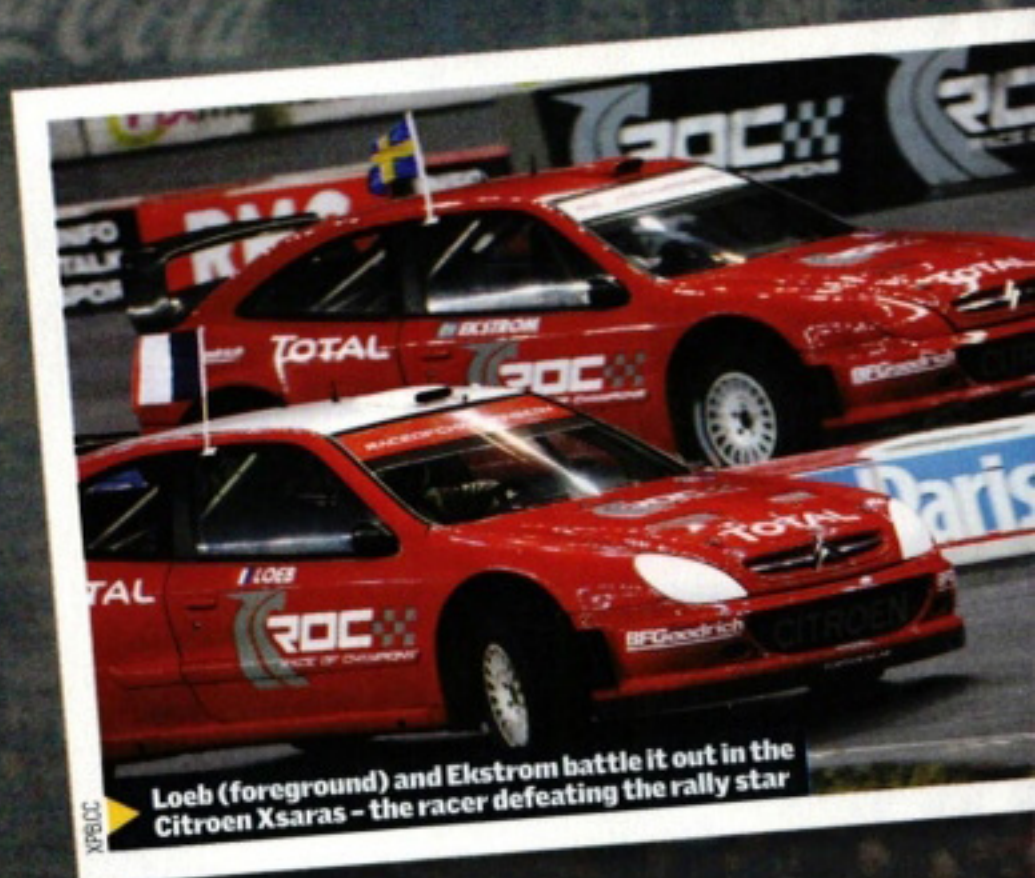
ENGINE	2000cc turbocharged
POWER	280bhp
TORQUE	422Nm
TRANSMISSION	6-speed dog gearbox, active centre differential
BRAKES	326mm discs, 4-pot caliper
SUSPENSION	Macpherson strut and coil spring, adjustable dampers
PRICE	£120,000 (approx)





PARIS
RACE OF
CHAMPIONS
FRANCE

16.12.06



Loeb (foreground) and Ekstrom battle it out in the Citroen Xsaras - the racer defeating the rally star

SWEDEN HARMONY FOR EKSTROM

Former DTM champ and occasional rally star Mattias Ekstrom came out on top in Paris. By EDD STRAW



THE RACE of

Champions has always been a fun event, but inevitably it's the winner who gets to enjoy himself the most. Not many drivers in the 19-year history of the event can have revelled so much in victory as this year's winner – former DTM champion Mattias Ekström. He was positively buzzing after defeating local hero Sébastien Loeb in the Super Final, even if the partisan Parisian crowd's stunned silence when he crossed the line ahead of their hero proved he was very much second favourite.

Ekström's victory is meaningless in the grand scheme of things, of course, but the event's status as one in which drivers compete for the hell of it, rather than as one from the high-stakes world of big money manufacturer campaigns, makes the Race of Champions unique – it still means something to the drivers. 'Eki' was on a genuine high (perhaps partly as a result of a disappointing DTM season) after beating Loeb in the Super Final, which included one face-off in Citroën Xsara World Rally Car machinery, as he admired the enormous trophy (we're not far off Borg-Warner proportions here) and showed off his Swedish flag, complete with Loeb's dedication.

"It says King of the Stade de France," explained Ekström. "No-one can beat me here again now it is going to Wembley next year!"

He seemed even more excited about the Tag Heuer watch he'd earned himself, but that's the kind of atmosphere that the Race of Champions creates. Its all star line-up draws aces throughout the motorsport world – Formula 1, world rallying, touring cars, sportscars and rally raids – and to see the 17 stars from all disciplines chatting in the drivers lounge was to see an environment of a bygone age in motorsport. That is the Race of Champions' ultimate success.

One thing that has always been true in motorsport is that you don't have to win to be a hero.

Appropriately enough, Ekström



Tin-top racer James Thompson didn't quite make enough of a splash for Team GB in the Nations Cup

was one of the star entertainers, as well as the top performer, on the night. Take a look at his performance in the drivers' semi-final, when he piled his Renault Megane straight into the wall at the first corner, kept his foot in and came back to beat Heikki Kovalainen by 0.0002 seconds (yes, that's two ten-thousandths of a second), if you need proof.

But even Ekström and local heroes Loeb and Champ Car winner Sébastien Bourdais had to give best to a most unexpected star turn. He is a relative unknown in motorsport circles and, after losing his high-profile team leaders, was left to represent America in the Nations Cup single-handedly. Travis Pastrana managed to incorporate bouncing off the walls (and, in one instance, driving up one) into his racing lines to win the hearts of the French crowd. Given that the American team had been given such a hard time by the crowd last year for reasons not entirely related to motorsport, this was a hell of an achievement. Pastrana was a finalist in the Nations Cup and a semi-finalist in the individual Race of Champions itself.

Pastrana won the American Rally Championship, against 1984 World Champion Stig Blomqvist no less, for Subaru this year but is best known for his motocross and X-Games exploits. He's most famous for executing a double back flip in

mid-air on his 'bike – that's the kind of entertainer we're talking about. He's heading for the WRC on a part-time basis next year before a full season in 2008, so Petter Solberg had better watch out because there might just be a more flamboyant performer in an Impreza muscling in on his patch.

With fellow American Jimmie Johnson and then replacement Scott Speed pulling out in the run up to the Race of Champions and attempts to bring in Kurt Busch or Robby Gordon (at less than 24 hours notice) falling foul of the Atlantic ocean and the realities of time, Pastrana made it to the Nations Cup final. The crowd favourite lost out 2-1 to Team Finland, but he'd been the star of the show on and off track. Given the Super Special style layout of the Race of Champions course, a collision between two cars is pretty unlikely, yet that's exactly what Pastrana came so close to triggering when he spin-turned a Megane into David Coulthard's path in the Nations Cup semi-final!

Marcus Gronholm ran Pastrana a close second for spills during the Nations Cup final, though. He managed to crash twice after stalling on the line in the Xsara, when up against Pastrana, and had to watch while Team Finland partner Heikki Kovalainen won the day. He was typically self-effacing about his part in his country's



Ford WRC ace Marcus Gronholm created some mess in the Nations Cup final aboard his Xsara



Triple world rally champion and defending RoC winner Loeb was spectacular in the Aston DB9

Nations Cup victory after losing to Ekström, Loeb and Pastrana in his three outings!

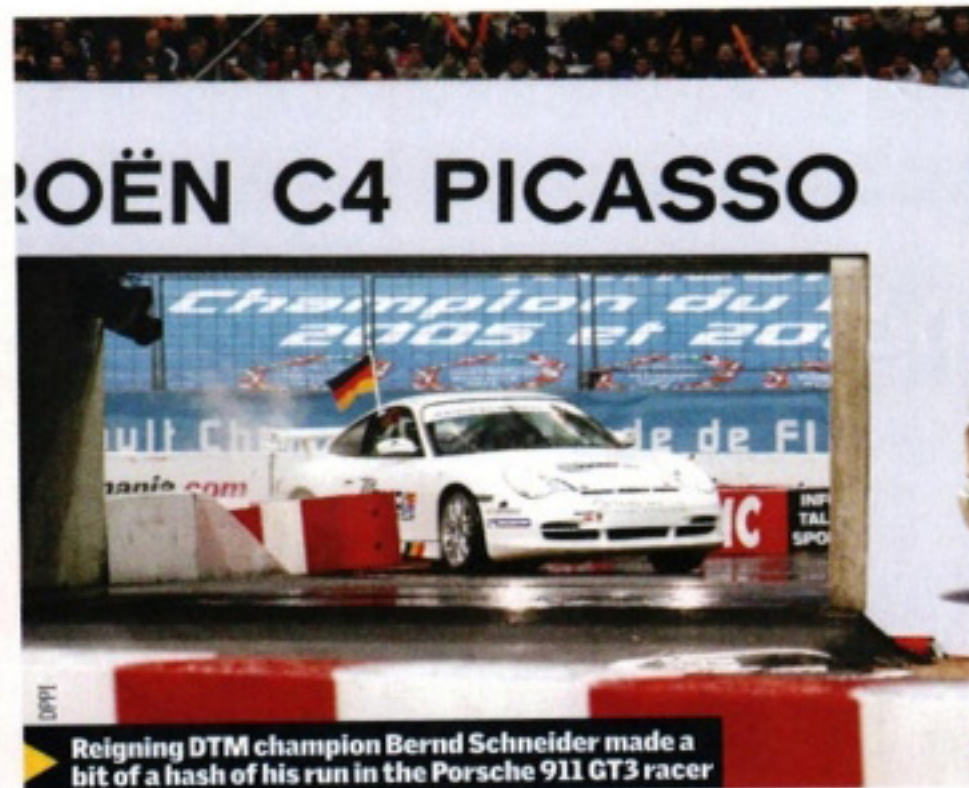
"This was not Team Finland, it was team Heikki Kovalainen," said Gronholm. "I was hitting everything. But still, it is nice to have won!"

While Gronholm's spectacular moments were limited to thumping walls and, on one occasion, extensively reprofiling the new-for-2006 circuit with a Xsara, his old WRC sparring partner Colin McRae deserved maximum points for style. He made it to the rally final of the Race of Champions itself, only losing out to Loeb by half a second. But if that contest was judged like figure skating, he'd have won by a mile, holding the Xsara in some beautifully balanced slides during the race. McRae could also be guaranteed to go into full-on showboating mode on the slowdown laps, something which clearly goes down well with Scots as David Coulthard also proved with some top-line sideways moments. Bourdais also attempted his own

showboating, managing to spin the Megane on a slowdown lap after defeating compatriot Yvan Muller in the semi-final of the Race of Champions. The crowd got right behind Bourdais, but his night came to a spectacular end on the last lap of the racers' final against Ekström when he locked up the front wheels of the Megane and thumped the barrier.

The crowd certainly enjoyed that one. Audience participation is crucial at the Race of Champions, particularly when it comes to anything French-related. In between the bouts, a multitude of diversions were brought (or usually wheeled) out. Heikki Kovalainen did some donuts and burnouts in a Renault R26 Formula 1 car, the ever-popular Terry Grant demonstrated that you can change the wheel of a Legend liveried race car while it is spin turning and you are hanging off it, while a rocket car attempted to blow half the crowd out of the stadium. It didn't quite manage it – although it did knock

"NO-ONE CAN BEAT ME HERE AGAIN NOW THAT IT IS GOING TO WEMBLEY NEXT YEAR!"
MATTIAS EKSTRÖM



Reigning DTM champion Bernd Schneider made a bit of a hash of his run in the Porsche 911 GT3 racer



World Touring Car aces Thompson (left) and Priaulx flew the flag for Team Great Britain

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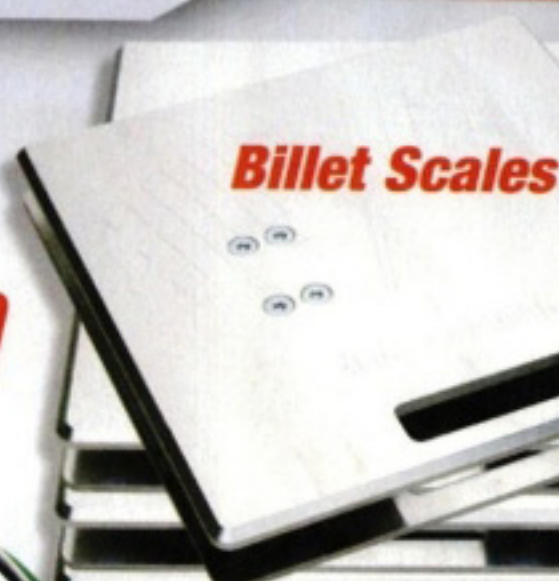
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Triple Champ Car title winner Sebastien Bourdais missed out on the final after this wild moment



International race and rally superstars were able to relax in each other's company during the event



Gronholm and Kovalainen celebrate their Nations' Cup win for Finland



Motorcycle daredevil and rally convert Travis Pastrana starred for Team USA - all on his own!

Over a photographer – but the driver settled for filling the entire stadium with smoke, which continued to hang in the air even after the final had started.

But the serious stuff was on track. As for Andy Priaulx and James Thompson, both making their first appearances in the Race of Champions and representing Autosport Team England, things didn't go so well. With the Nations Cup draw neatly picking out the rivalries, the team lost out 2-1 to Team F1 Racing Scotland after Thompson was twice beaten by Coulthard. Priaulx and Thompson, who was a late replacement for the injured Jenson Button, then fell at the first in the Race of Champions to Bourdais and Bernd Schneider respectively. Priaulx was not overly delighted after losing out in a battle of Aston Martin GT Rallies after a spectator –

presumably French – managed to fool him into thinking the race had finished a lap before it actually did by waving a rogue flag. "I saw the one lap board and backed off and undid my belts when I saw the chequered flag," said the very disappointed Priaulx, who was nonetheless pleased to have beaten McRae in the Aston Martin Rally Car during the Nations Cup.

"I'm told somebody in the crowd was waving it. Hopefully they'll invite me back next year and I can put the experience to good use."

But the results, by fair means or foul, weren't the point. The Race of Champions is about entertainment and, if the organisers' plans for a 20th anniversary extravaganza next year come to fruition, there's no excuse to not mark down the first Wembley RoC as one of the must see events of 2007. And that goes for the drivers, as well as the fans! ☘



Q&A MATTIAS EKSTROM

■ What does winning the Race of Champions mean to you?

This is the individual greatest moment of my whole life because to beat other race drivers with this ability in the same material is something special. Winning the DTM title will always be the biggest achievement in my racing career and this I call a fun event. But to beat him [Sebastien Loeb] in the car that he has been driving since day one – I never call anything impossible because my girlfriend always tells me that anything is possible. When I went out I was rocking at 105 per cent and when I crossed the finish line in the Megane it was such a relief. Last year it was really disappointing being beaten in the first round and having to watch, but this year I went all the way!

■ What was it like to beat Sebastien in the Citroen? Was it a perfect race?

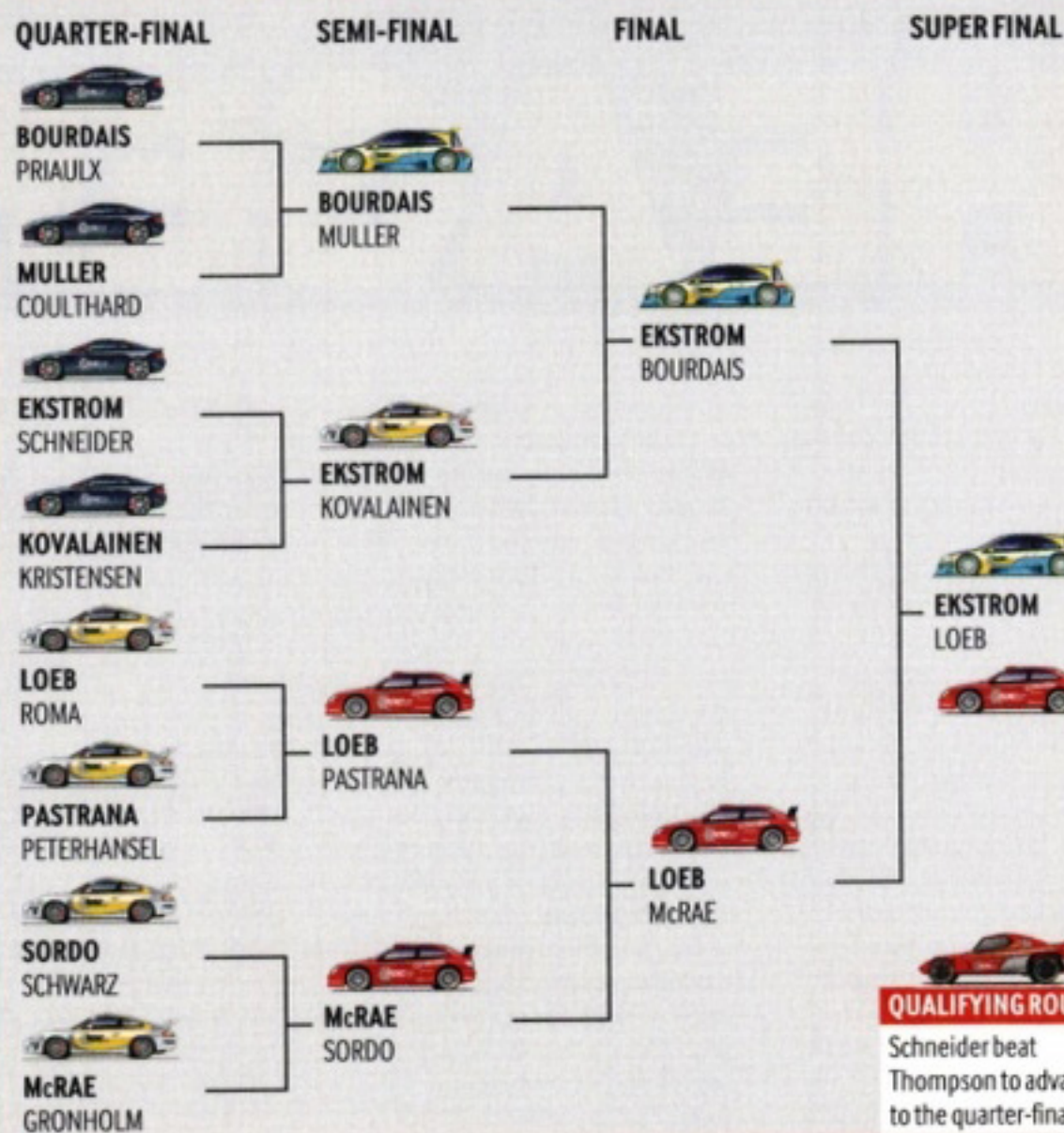
I was prepared to take the risks and to

brake at the latest point but I still tried to keep it tidy with not too much oversteer. I had one big moment! Except for that it was a really clean run. Once I beat Seb in his own car I knew that I could win it because I expected to win in the Megane.

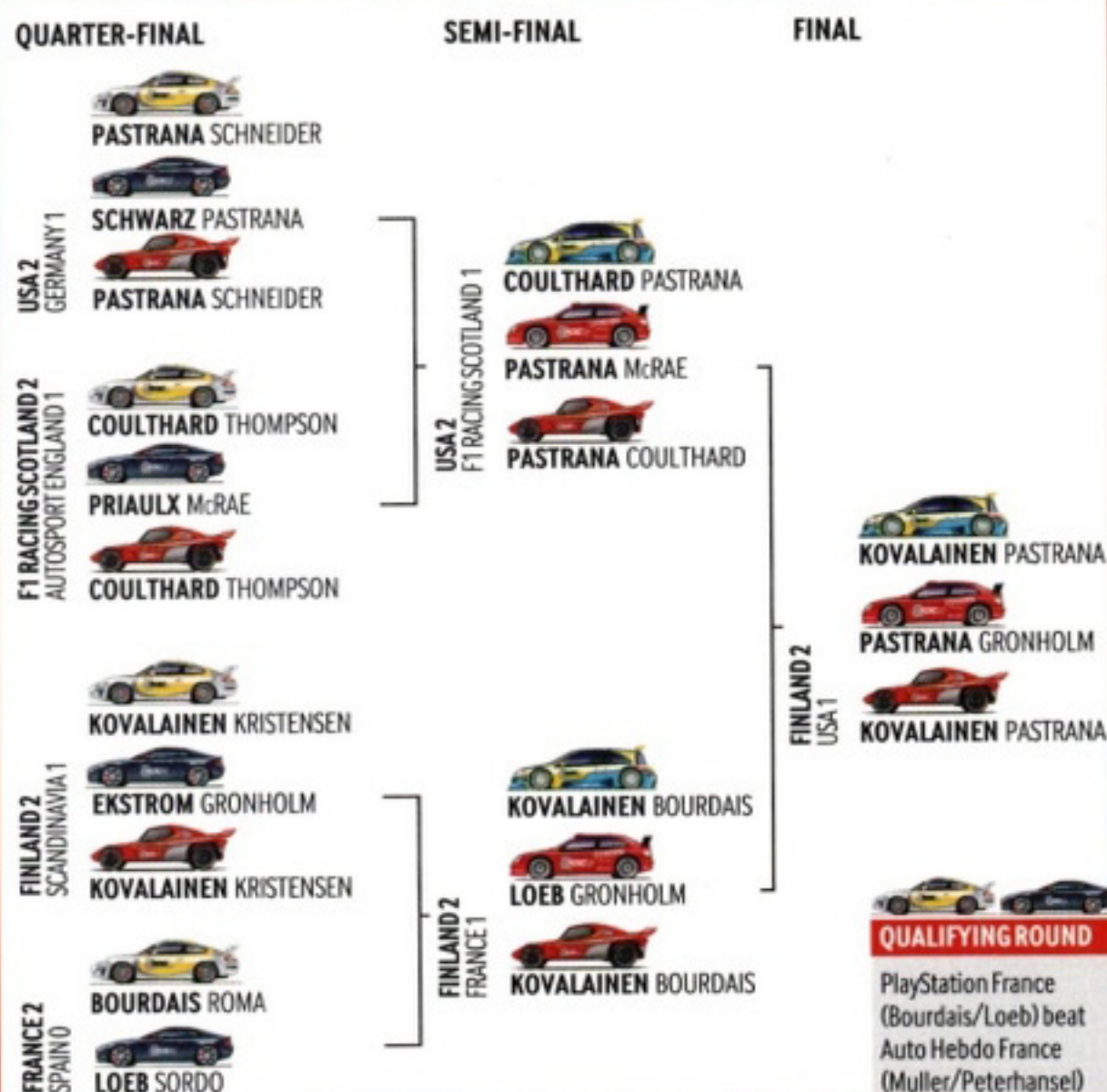
■ How did you manage to win the semi-final against Heikki Kovalainen despite going off at the first corner?

Tom Kristensen said to me before that Heikki is not unbeatable and be sure you go flat out from the beginning. In the first corner I went in too quick but the time I lost in that moment I think I gained in entry because I was so quick in! After that race I had to try to see the TV to see who won because when I looked across at Heikki it was like looking in the mirror – everything was exactly the same: it was a yellow car in the same place! I was using my full-face helmet and I didn't know who had won.

RACE OF CHAMPIONS



NATIONS CUP





TOP OF THE AGEN

They boast eight big-time tin-top titles between them, but Andy Priaulx and Bernd Schneider have never raced against each other. And, chances are, they never will. The closest they've come to any on-track combat was this year's Race of Champions. Granted, the Race of Champions is primarily a fun event and doesn't carry the kind of pressure that being Mercedes' or BMW's leading flag-bearer in a multi-million pound race programme does, but in an event full of tantalising match-ups, Priaulx versus Schneider was one that everyone was hoping for. It didn't happen, but although they didn't meet on the track at the Stade de France, Autosport brought them together to talk WTCC, DTM and a unified touring car series. Turns out, they've got a lot in common.

EDD STRAW: So when are we going to see Priaulx versus Schneider on track?

ANDY PRIAULX: For me, I'd love to go up against Bernd because he has been a touring car legend for many years. It's so difficult to make comparisons between the WTCC and the DTM because they are two different championships and two very different types of cars. I've got massive respect for Bernd

and it would be great to race him one day.

BERND SCHNEIDER: But you have to hurry up, Andy, or I will retire first!

ES: But this is the year you have shown the young guys you're still the best – you must have years left?

BS: At Mercedes all the time we have collected young drivers and built up a good future for them. In the beginning it's always hard because people didn't know, for example, Jamie Green. He came into the team and was beating me so everybody says 'hey, what's going on? He's getting old now' and then in 10 years when he's doing Formula 1 they realise actually he's quite good! But that's why we take drivers like Jamie into the team because they have already done something special. We started with Dario Franchitti back in 1995 and he kept beating me. I had to push really hard against him and already people were thinking I was getting old!

AP: Like Bernd says, there are always young guys coming through like [new BMW signing] Augusto Farfus. Everybody is talking about the young Farfus at BMW! But you have to look at the performance from the start to the end of the year. Look at what Bernd has achieved. Five championships now and he's the best over a whole year. To be quick on one lap is

good, to be quick in one race is good, but you need to be quick over the whole year.

BS: To go back to the original question, for me to be able to race against Andy I would really love to see the manufacturers working together so that we have one really good championship because it's not good that we have two series with some manufacturers spending money here and some over there. They really need to be working together to have one very strong touring car championship.

AP: That would be good.

BS: The target should be that we find solutions to work together. At the moment I follow the races in the WTCC and I'm really happy for Andy because if you win the title three times in a row, it doesn't just come through luck. There are not many drivers who can do this.

AP: When I started racing I looked at Bernd and thought 'if I could be like him one day it would be perfect!' Every driver wants to go up against all the best guys in the world and it would be great to get the two championship together with Mercedes, BMW, Audi all racing against each other again. You'd have to control the costs to get it to work, but it would be superb.



DA

WTCC and DTM superstars Andy Priaulx and Bernd Schneider sat down with EDD STRAW in Paris to put the tin-top world to rights

ES: What do you think of each other's championship?

AP: I'd love to drive a DTM car because they just look superb. From a driving challenge point of view it would be really interesting for me with downforce and carbon brakes.

Whereas with my BMW you still get a little buzz, the big buzz is more about doorhandle to doorhandle racing. With the DTM, just driving one of the cars would be superb. But I know that Bernd would really enjoy the racing in the WTCC, it can get quite funny sometimes, but I don't make any comparisons.

ES: Since the DTM car is so much faster than the WTCC car, do you not look at them and think they are easy to drive and that the DTM is a proper car?

BS: WTCC cars are definitely not easy to drive. It doesn't matter what category you are in it is not easy to be good. Even if you race in the Polo Cup with 110bhp. It takes a special skill to drive these sorts of cars. The important thing about touring cars, whatever the championship is, is that the show must be good for television and for the spectators. Of course, drivers want to have 800bhp with loads of downforce, but if we have 400-450bhp and a certain amount of downforce we are happy because we can put on a show.

AP: There's got to be a middle way. The WTCC can take some

major positives from the DTM. The promotion there is fantastic, whereas in the WTCC it is not very good. Maybe the way forward is to concentrate on getting national coverage.

The DTM is effectively a national championship operating at a world-class level. Maybe it would be interesting to all do national championships with maybe four or five big international races that brings everyone together? That would be interesting.

ES: Improving the show has its downsides for the drivers, though. You both carried success ballast regularly this year?

BS: The weight situation is a little bit more fair in the DTM because if Mercedes wins, all the Mercedes get weight, whereas in the WTCC it's just the driver who gets the penalty. That's really unfair to the drivers because they are fighting for the championship in seventh or eighth place and the spectators do not really know what is going on. With the DTM, the spectators can understand that all the Mercedes are 20kg heavier than the Audis and if the Audis are ahead they can understand why.

AP: The danger with the WTCC is you get the championship contenders racing in 10th to 15th places when we should be winning races. The crowd does want to see the guys who are

fighting for the title trying to win races and, in the end, you're just going to some meetings trying to get one point. I don't enjoy that. But that's only a small point because with the WTCC the biggest weakness is the promotion.

ES: Do you ever look enviously at more 'pure' racing categories. You've both had experience of Formula 1 cars?

AP: I don't really think about it. For me, I'm a touring car driver. F1 is glamorous, it's hi-tech and it's fast but people want to see wheel-to-wheel action with four cars going into a corner side by side. That's what touring car racing delivers – intense racing with everybody on the edge of their seat because something is always happening.

BS: We should not compare. It's the highest class in motorsport and the DTM has taken some things and copied them, like the qualifying format. One reason why F1 drivers are big superstars is because people cannot get close to them. To get an autograph from Alonso or Schumacher is really special because you cannot get close. We want people to get close so maybe this means we are not superstars, but we want to be open. Look at Hockenheim when he had 38,000 people in the pits! Getting around was very difficult, but this is the way we want it. It's different to F1, we must do it our own way. ■

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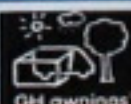
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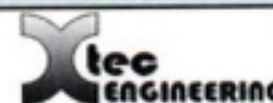
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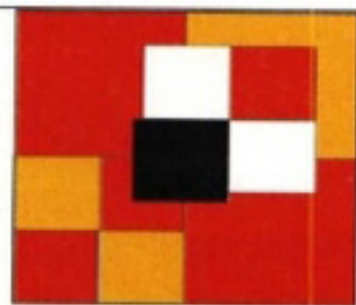
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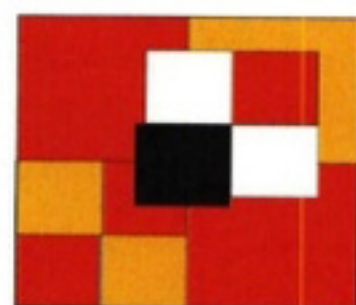
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Unit also has on board a comprehensive AV system comprising Video player, CD player, Satellite decoder (plus dish and pole) amplifier and fittings for 2 internal plasma screens (screens not supplied). There is wiring to the exterior of the coach to mount 2 further plasma screens if required in the awning area. 12m x 3m awning includes all the framework, cover and grid matt flooring.

These vehicles are finished to a high standard, viewing is recommended. All sensible offers considered.

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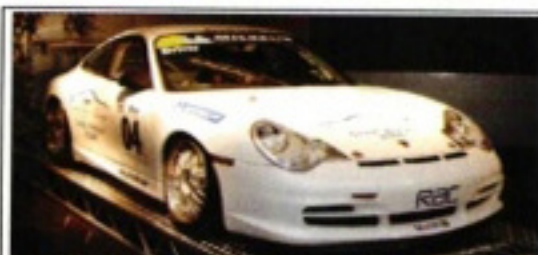
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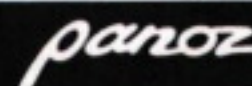


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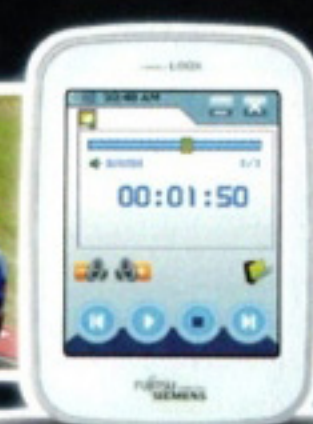
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NATIONAL

ALL THE NATIONAL & CLUB RACE, RALLY AND HISTORIC NEWS. PLUS FULL RESULTS ROUND-UP

HYPERION SETS UP LADDER FOR WOMEN

CATERHAM TEAM Hyperion Motorsport has taken over the Formula Woman Championship and is planning to create a ladder of progression from the novice series to help more women racers into mainstream motorsport.

Next season's champion will be rewarded with a fully paid drive in the Caterham Roadsports Championship and could also receive a Formula BMW test with the team.

Hyperion boss Steve Hindle, who replaces Graeme Glew as head of Formula Woman, said: "The shareholders saw the need for someone new. It's an exceptional concept that just needs better management and improved credibility, and that's what we're going to provide."

"We can offer links to all Caterham championships and other areas of motorsport as well. We aim to attract novices and then move them into mainstream racing. They have the opportunity to win two years of free racing and in that time they will build their experience and exposure to help them raise sponsorship for the next level. We would love to be able to bring young drivers through Formula Woman to FBMW."

Hyperion plans to introduce more changes to ensure the series, and its competitors, are taken seriously.

In the past, the competition has rewarded 16 winners with a place in the series, but they have had to raise the budget to compete themselves. Hindle has already guaranteed that the top three 2007 drivers will receive free drives and is working to raise sponsorship for more cars.

FWoman racer Kirsty Jeffery said: "It was a bit of an anticlimax with no prize last year, you had to go out on your own with no support, but it's sounding a lot more attractive now."

Hindle is also looking to offer young drivers a route into single-seater racing: "We're open to competitors of any age but we're hoping to attract younger women who aspire to careers in racing. If a young woman with the right ambitions wins the series, we will also give her a Formula BMW test."

FWoman runner-up Vicki Lloyd will test Hyperion's FBMW in the next month. The team is also close to confirming a driver for its first season in the FBMW championship in 2007.



Formula Woman could provide a step into professional motor racing with a new plan thanks to new owners Hyperion Motorsport



Manor will be looking to get back on top of Formula Renault with rookie racer Sims

MANOR ROOKIE AIMS FOR FRENALUT CHARGE

FORMULA RENAULT rookie Alex Sims believes he can challenge for the 2007 championship after signing for Manor Motorsport.

Sims made an impressive debut after stepping up from karts to cars in the FRenault Winter Series last month, finishing second at Croft in his third race. Since then he has tested regularly with Manor since and the deal for 2007 was confirmed just before Christmas.

"I don't see next season as a learning year at all," said Sims. "I feel comfortable in

the car already and plan to test enough that I'm up to speed by the first race. I'm keen to move up the ladder as quickly as possible and I'm looking for my first year to be a championship year."

"The best chance to achieve that was to go with Manor, they're a top team and they'll be very hungry after not having the best of seasons last year."

Sims will be one of a host of new drivers on the FRenault grid next year as the majority of this year's drivers will move on for 2007. Fellow karting graduates Adam

and Riki Christodoulou, Jon Lancaster and Dean Stoneman are likely to sign up, as are Richard Singleton, Adriano Buzaid, Jordan Oakes, Martin Ragginger and Carl Skerlong, who are set to join from other series.

Manor team manager Tony Shaw is confident Sims will be a contender after the 18-year-old's impressive performances in testing. He said: "Alex is an exceptional talent. He was impressive in the Winter Series and he's done a lot of mileage since then. He really is good enough that he can think about winning races straight away."

IN BRIEF

PHIL KEEN gave the new Mosler GT3 (below) a shakedown at Donington Park before Christmas, despite the FIA's recent rejection of the car in that category. European racers Stefan Mucke and Stephane Lemeret were also present, driving the Kevin Riley/Ian Flux GT2 car.



MANOR ran four of its Formula Renaults at Donington Park's final test of the year. Alex Sims was joined by Brazilian Eduardo Leite, Alex Morgan and Irish Formula Fordster Kris Loane.

FORMULA BMW Germany racer Martin Ragginger and Pierre Renom tested Formula Renaults for Mark Burdett Motorsport at Donington, while Eurotek Motorsport ran former EuroCup racer Frank Kechele and German FBMW racer Tobias Hegewald.

GINETTA JUNIOR runner-up Jordan Williams had his first Formula BMW test at Donington Park before Christmas. The 16-year-old has signed with Team Loctite for next season.

DOUBLERRACING'S first Formula BMW signing Carlos Huertas had his first run in the car at Brands Hatch before Christmas. A morning crash delayed his running but he was able to continue in the afternoon.



SIMON HADFIELD is planning to race a Huron HA4 in selected races in 2007. The car was originally raced in Group 6 and last ran in the Birkett Six Hours in 2003, in the hands of Hadfield and David Clark. Hadfield tested it at Donington (above) for the first time since its rebuild.

THE FORMULA Palmer Audi Championship has confirmed a highlights deal with Motors TV for next season. Action from all eight rounds will be broadcast in half-hour shows.

THE MSA National Court ordered T-Car racer Max Chilton to pay £1000 in costs after an inquiry into the result of the race at Snetterton in August, his third unsuccessful appeal against the race results.



Nash impressed on a run in the title-winning Jamun Mygale SJ2006 at Donington Park

NASH EYES TITLE CHARGE

UK FORMULA Ford frontrunner James Nash is targeting the 2007 title after several top teams showed an interest in running him.

Driving a Fluid Motorsport Van Diemen, Nash came close to winning a UK FF round this season and is now undertaking an extensive testing regime involving race-winning Mygale, Ray and Van Diemen chassis. He drove Nathan Freke's championship-winning Jamun Mygale SJ2006 at Donington before Christmas and has also conducted a Van Diemen test. He was due to come out in a Joe Tandy Racing Ray when Autosport closed for press and has also

received interest from Ray Sport.

Nash confirmed that he has yet to make a final decision on which team he will run with. He said: "We've been going round to find the best deal and the best car. We couldn't find the budget for Formula 3 so our aim is to win the UK FF title."

"The Mygale is a very good car. It's light and nimble and is very easy to drive. It gives more feedback than the Van Diemen, but if Van Diemen do a lot of work over the winter they'll be back at the front."

Jamun boss Tony Mundy was impressed with Nash's pace at Donington. "He was really quick and was well under our lap record, but nothing's

signed yet," he said.

Van Diemen Fford Festival winner Richard Tannahill and Callum MacLeod have also conducted successful tests with Jamun in recent weeks. Tannahill said: "I don't think there's much difference in the pace of the Mygale and Van Diemen. It's a matter of driver preference."

"We're probably still going to do UK FF, but we haven't decided on the team."

Jay Bridger has already been confirmed at Jamun for next year and Mundy is also hoping to sign Sarah Playfair. "As far as we're concerned she has a place in the team," he said. "She just needs to find a budget."

NEW OWNERS FOR TOP SINGLE-SEATER SQUAD

BRITISH GT champion Chris Niarchos has moved into single-seater racing as a team owner after buying out top Formula Renault UK team AKA Lemac, with current team boss Andrew Kirkaldy.

The team will be known as AKA Cobra, after Niarchos's Cobra Racing organisation, and may move into other categories in the future. Niarchos said: "We will look at higher formulas and the natural extension of a single-seater team as time goes by."

"I like the idea of taking younger drivers and coaching them and I'd wanted to get into other areas of motorsport for some time. Andrew and I have known each other for over three years and he's been

involved in so many areas of the sport outside of GTs. With his knowledge of racing and my inclination towards marketing and presentation we thought it made perfect sense."

Niarchos also hopes to give drivers PR training as well as racing tuition. He said: "If we can continue our relationships

with drivers into higher categories, like F3, we'll nurture drivers for several years."

AKA was formerly backed by John Jakes, father of James, who raced in the 2004 and 2005 seasons. It ran Paddy Hogan to second and Jeremy Metcalfe to fifth in the FRenault championship this year.



British GT champion Niarchos has bought leading FRenault team AKA

SPORTSCAR ACE TO HELP BRITS

SPORTSCAR LEGEND David Brabham will front a new MSA-backed scheme to develop promising British racing drivers.

The MSA Race Elite—following on from the MSA Rally Elite, launched last year—will offer six young drivers a programme including on-track coaching, engineering skills and technical understanding, physical training, mind coaching, career management, sponsorship generation, and media presentation.

The Brabham Performance Clinic will work on the racing side of the programme, while the assessment and training elements of the scheme will be conducted at Bath University, where the drivers will work with

specialist coaches, masseurs, psychologists and physiotherapists.

Brabham said: "I've learned a hell of a lot in my 23-year career and I wish I'd known at the start what I know now. I feel passionately about this and it's a great opportunity to give something back. We will take the best young British drivers, develop their talent and help them to make the grade at the highest possible level."

Applications will open when the MSA Race Elite launches at the Autosport International Show at the Birmingham NEC on January 11-14. A selection panel will then choose up to six candidates to join the scheme and they will be announced before the 2007 season begins.

MURRAY TO LOCTITE

FORMULA BMW racer Daniel Murray will return to the series next season with Team Loctite, which finished second with Oliver Turvey this year.

Murray, who was impressive towards the end of his rookie season of racing and was one of the fastest UK runners at the World Final at Valencia last month, is targeting race wins and

a possible championship assault in his second season.

He said: "I'm very pleased to be with a team with such a strong record. I know I've still got a lot to learn but I could feel myself improving at the end of the season. If I can start well next year and get an early win, there's no reason why I can't go for the title."

Murray tested at Donington Park and Brands Hatch in November, and also had a run in the team's F3 car. Loctite boss Trevor Powell added: "Dan absolutely flew in testing with us and was even quicker in the F3 car. We're delighted to have him and he should prove to be one to watch as the season unfolds."



Murray is looking for race wins with Loctite in 2007



GT NISSAN RETURNS TO TRACK

Former BTCC racer Anthony Reid and Chris Buncombe tested RJN's GT2 Nissan 350Z at Donington Park before Christmas

ASCARI'S FULL TIME IN GT3

GT SQUAD Damax has confirmed that it will run at least two GT3 Ascari KZ1 Rs in the 2007 British GT Championship, as well as appearing in the FIA GT3 series.

Damax made sporadic appearances in Brit GT this year, but team boss Robin Ward now wishes to push for the title. "We'll definitely be doing the full season and we expect to win," he said. "We're not doing it to come second. I'm sure we'll be at the front."

"I haven't got any drivers firmed up yet but we're talking to lots of people."

Aaron Scott and Stuart Turvey won the GT3 class twice for Damax in a rare Brit GT appearance at Snetterton last year. The Ascari also proved competitive when the team contested the Brands Hatch and Silverstone rounds.

POWER'S KA POWER

JUNIOR RALLYCROSS racer Ben Power is set to move up to the SuperModified category in the 2007 British Rallycross Championship after acquiring Phil Collard's Ford SportKa.

Power won the MDA Junior championship and finished second in both the British and BTRDA Clubmans championships in 2006. He hopes to test the 650kg, 2-litre

car extensively before the BRC gets underway at Lydden on April 9.

He said: "We could have gone rallying next year but I enjoy rallycross and want to continue racing. I'm looking forward to testing the Ka and getting up to speed over the winter."

Power will be the first Junior graduate to tackle the SuperModified championship.

NATIONAL ROUND-UP

FEWER BMW RACES
THE FORMULA BMW UK Championship will skip the last BTCC round of the year at Thruxton on October 13-14.

The 18-round series will conclude at Knockhill on September 1-2.

BMW has also removed the upper age limit for Rookie Cup eligibility and abolished the separate rookie scoring system. The top 2007 rookie will be decided by the overall system.

The first official test of 2007 will be at Rockingham on Friday 2nd and Saturday 3rd of March.

BLAZING GUNNS
LOADED GUNN Racing is building two new dramatically styled TS9 cars for Sports 2000's Ford Duratec-powered premier ship class over the winter.

Newcomer Steve Taylor has bought one chassis and the other will be raced by team principal Jonathan Loader's protégé Tom Mills. Sufficient components for another example will also be built.

The TS8 in which Mills impressed this season has been sold to Pinto class stalwart Mike Dodd, to supercede his Swift.

OUTING FOR NEWY
LEGENDARY FORMULA 1 aerodynamicist Adrian Newey will be the featured designer of the GPlive event at Donington on May 18-20.

The current Red Bull design chief will speak in a series of Masterclass Questions and Answers forums in which fans will be invited to participate. A display of cars that Newey has designed will also be present.

"We're absolutely delighted that Adrian has agreed to join us," said event organiser Richard Morgan.



HUMBLE PYE

MARCUS PYE

"RENAULT REMAINS AT THE FOREFRONT OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT"

EXCLUSIVELY ONE-MAKE its permanent element may be, but next year's British Touring Car Championship-supporting TOCA package will at least have a new look across three-fifths of its content.

Renault – which, with the foresight and commitment of its UK arm, with Tim Jackson at its racing helm – remains at the forefront of British motor sport, as it has throughout its most professional era, and leads this onslaught.

The hard-charging 2-litre Formula Renault single-seaters, built by Tatuus of Italy, will have a bold new shape. Unsurprisingly reminiscent of Fernando Alonso's F1 World Championship winners of the past two years, the update will also bear a striking family resemblance to its facelifted World Series V6 cousin, sourced from Dallara.

Work continues apace in Concorezzo and every effort is being made to unveil the new FRenault aero package at next month's Autosport International Show, that traditional winter icebreaker for racers already confirmed and for aspirants with fat cheque books.

Tin-top enthusiasts will also be able to see the Regie's most powerful Clio yet – the umpteenth evolution (I've forgotten how many shapes we've seen) of Nicole's Parisian street fighter – at Birmingham's NEC

Since its STL series, launched in 1974, Renault's contribution to the sport here, and carefully targeted promotional spend within it, has been unparalleled. A pity, therefore, that original TOCA partners Ford and Vauxhall let hugely successful racing interests lapse.

SEAT is the new Spanish kid on the block. While its new Touring Car inspired promotion may not yet have attracted the level of support of the Clio series (let's hope it's not another Vauxhall Vectra V6 flop in terms of competitor registrations), the hot Cupras deserve to fly.

The Porsche Carrera Cup will have bigger fields now that more of the spectacular 400bhp cars are joining the fray in the 997's second year. New teams and new drivers will add to the colour and make things tougher at the sharp end.

BMW's single-seater training championship (for which the Bavarians did a Renault and looked outside the fatherland, to 2007 F3 graduate Mygale, for its cars) moves into year four here with a strong reputation and enormous resource behind it. If only it was more accessible to less well-heeled talents.

TOCA boss and Motor Sports Association chairman Alan Gow has always slotted some interesting 'guest races' into the programmes where track times permits. It will be interesting to see what he places under the spotlight next season.

Having managed a Formula 5000 team in his native Australia during the class's mid-1970s heyday, Gow is watching the growing historic scene with genuine interest. If that should win a prized fixture – and the Kiwis are eager to bring their cars back to Europe next summer – expect a field of at least 25 cars.

I would pay to watch that, but I'm enthusiastic because, with the F2 Chevron B40 I co-owned for five years gone and one of the dream cars of my youth on the ocean from the USA this month to replace it, I could compete on a BTCC bill for the first time since the Formula Vauxhall races in former sprint sparring partner Steve Jewell's car at Knockhill in 1994. It's been too long.



Renault continues to support the TOCA package with its Clio and single-seater series

LET'S CLUB TO

Great racing, fine camaraderie, championships which went to the wire and the blossoming of some young stars coloured another flat-out 750MC season. Formula Vee, its frontline single-seater series, was dominated by brothers Sam and Jake Oliveira. Rearmed by mentor Dave Jordan with Mike Jenvey's 2004 and '05 title-winning 'Sheane-Jenvey', younger sibling Sam won seven of the 13 rounds to notch up the car's third successive title victory.

Sam was in a class of his own for much of the season, but that should not suggest that the air-cooled war was uncompetitive. Until he got going, it was anybody's title.

Jake – who had wrecked his Storm chassis at Cadwell Park – bounced back to score the first win for Stephen Glasswell's and Fergus Dalton's marque at Donington a fortnight later. Oliveira major won again at Cadwell's June double-header, where Daniel Hands landed an overdue maiden win in his AHS Challenger. Hands finished third in the table, pipping Martyn Donn's unique Scarab.

GAC drivers won the other rounds. Ian Buxton triumphed on Vee's long-awaited return to Castle Combe, and at Brands Hatch en route to fifth overall. Graham Card sprang the big surprise, however, by breaking an eight-year layoff to win Mallory's opener in the works car. Unfortunately, illness curtailed his challenge.

John Hughes headed the Leystone runners, and led on consistency until Sam O prevailed. Another useful youngster worth watching next year is Martin Galpin who shone under the GAC banner.

The 750 Formula is this country's oldest club racing series and, while today's 1100cc Fiat-powered cars bear no resemblance to the Austin Seven-engined devices of the 1950s, they have saved it from extinction.

Multiple champions Mick Harris and Bob Simpson slugged it out all year with Anthony Raine (between shunts) and Peter Bove. Darvi 88P driver Bove bounded up on the rails to snatch his second crown from Simpson with a perfect victory at Mallory's wet finale. With most wins (six), he fully merited the honour.

The Locost series was also wide open as the 1300cc Ford-powered critters squabbled around the country. Three wins from the first four rounds made Declan McDonnell odds-on favourite to retain the number one. Despite not taking the chequer again for four months, he retained the crown, edging out Brendan Dudley, Martin Gambling and Brian Mitcham.

Having missed the opening double-header, 2004 champion Mitcham clawed his way back into contention, only to be rolled out of Donington's season-closer.

The top six all tasted victory, Aaron Bailey grabbing his first in the wet at Thruxton and Adam White closing his campaign in style at Donington.

The new SaxMax series was a roaring success. Twenty five took up the challenge and while Liam McMillan (whose father Paul's company built most of the cars) won all bar one of the 10 rounds – runner-up Daniel Brown took the ninth at Snetterton – a big future is assured.

Brown's elder brother Robert finished third in the points, ahead of Andrew Tibbs, Jake Farndon and the promising Cassey 'KC' Watson, the most combative of three young ladies.

A massive engine failure at Donington failed to deter Craig Shepherd on his charge to the Hot Hatch crown. The 2004 Stock Hatch champ's screaming Peugeot 306 GTI usually had the legs on runner-up Andy Neal's sleek Honda Integra Type-R and Tony Doley's Peugeot 206 GTI.

Stuart Levers's vividly-hued Honda Civic and the evergreen Andy McLennan's Suzuki Swift GTi won the classes but, worryingly, grid sizes hovered in the mid-teens.

Support for Formula 4 also fluctuated alarmingly, but once Chris Hodgen left in a huff, nobody got close to Chris Lewis in his Comtec-ised Van Diemen. Runner-up Damon Bland led for most of the year, because Lewis missed Mallory's twin openers, but again race victory eluded him.

Defending champion Barry Pritchard won three of the first four rounds, but family illness sidelined him until the final race



750 MC

Above: Sam Oliveira stormed to the Formula Vee title with seven wins

Below: Declan McDonnell, seen leading at Donington, won the Locost series



at Snetterton. He finished second there, to ex-motorcycle racer Chris Vinall, whose persistence in his 'bike-engined' Van Diemen merited victory and third overall.

Malcolm Scott finished best of the Formula Ford Zetec class runners, having spent most of the year trying to overpower Peter Allen.

Andy Hiley and Charles Sterling were still disputing the Kit Car championship going into the final double-header at Mallory. Hiley wrapped it up by finishing second in the opening leg to Gary Goodyear's Toyota-powered RAW Striker, thus the cancellation of the second race mattered not to Sterling, secure atop class A with the Rover V8-motivated Dax Rush.

Jonathan Wright won the RGB series, his Radical SR4 too fleet for its closest class-mate, the intriguing family-built BDN of Rob Baldwin. Among the standard Honda Fireblade masses, the omnipresent Tim Gray finished second overall in his Stuart Taylor Phoenix, albeit pushed hard by John Goodwin and Derek Jones.

Dwindling support for the Roadsports and Sevens classes resulted in them run concurrently. Alec Livesley won the final title in the former in his Zetec-powered Ginetta Coupe, from David Dawson's Evante.

The Caterhams again produced scintillating racing. Peter Ratcliff emerged on top once more, from Kevin Williams.

by Marcus Pye

TAKING STOCK

HAYDEN GOES ONE BETTER

THE PHENOMENON

which is the Stock Hatch championship roared on into its ninth year with Maurice Hayden (below) determined to improve upon his second place to Darren Blumson in 2005.

Citroen Saxo specialist Hayden set off like a rocket, winning the opening round at Brands Hatch, but typically it was not until the chequered flag had fallen for the final time – at Snetterton in October – that the title was decided.

Ten different winners, driving six marques of car – Pete Morgan, Hilary Howlett, John Hemming, Matt Wilkins and Martin Boon collected laurels before Hayden became the first to claim a second victory in the half-way round at Cadwell Park – illustrated the magnitude of Hayden's achievement.

Simon Hunt, Renault Clio Cup aspirant Alastair 'JJ' Vannier (who brilliantly bagged what must surely

be the venerable Ford Fiesta XR2's last hurrah at Brands in August), Gareth Wright and eventual runner-up Chris Petto's buzzy little Suzuki Swift subsequently stamped race winning marks on the series.

For most of the season Hayden was locked in combat with fellow 'Saxophonist' Morgan, Class B champion Petto and Hunt's Peugeot 106, but Morgan's challenge ended abruptly when his immaculate car was destroyed in a multi-car startline shunt at Oulton.

But even that violent prang paled against the massive chain reaction shunt at Brands the previous month, which left Paddock Hill Bend looking like a scrap yard, and a lot of competitors either seeking new shells for a speedy return to action or sitting out the remainder of the season. Mercifully, all involved escaped serious injury.



Right: Nelson Rowe (87) finally got the better of FFord rival Neil Fowler

Below left: Ginetta-mounted Randall pipped Lotus man Shepherd for Historic Road Sports honours

Below right: Mike Hanna's Imp was the top Historic Saloon runner



Not one but two Brands Hatch GP circuit spectacles, plus the Silverstone Classic and Oulton Park Gold Cup meetings, topped a superlative 40th Anniversary season for the Historic Sports Car Club. Eleven events comprised the club's busiest season to date and, fittingly, the quality of racing was exceptional. None

was better than the Formula Ford title battle. Denied in controversial circumstances in 2005, Nelson Rowe strengthened his resolve to beat Neil Fowler, champion for five years running. Previously a British and European Caterham title winner, Rowe achieved his ambition, but only after a succession of magnificent scraps with Fowler.

Yet it all started badly for Rowe, who spun his Crossle 20F out of Donington's wet opener while 20 seconds clear. Arch-rival Fowler won, leaving Nelson playing catch-up. In fact, Lola T200-mounted Neil won the first three rounds, but four victories on the trot then buoyed Rowe.

He eventually cracked it by chasing Fowler home at the Silverstone finale. The latter's team-mate, series sponsor David Wild, was third with his Lola, ahead of Nigel Bancroft (Crossle). Andrew Mansell (Merlyn) was the best novice.

Former British FF2000 champion Richard Trott was the quickest Classic F3 driver – his Chevron B43's speed through corners was awesome – but he lost out at the final round to a hugely motivated Keith White.

A jumped start at Castle Combe and a non-start next time out at Oulton Park ruined Trott's title chances, but White kept his cool, notching up points in his Ralt RT1.

The all-March squabble behind them went in favour of former Austin-Healey dicer Paul Campfield (803) who overhauled Iain Rowley (793) for the bronze medal.

Albert Clements was the best of a growing 1600cc F3 bunch in his Lotus 59. Nigel Grant deservedly won the FF2000 invitation class from fellow Delta man Peter Richards, although teenager Tom Bradshaw left them both panting when armed with father John's Royale RP27 amid his NW FF1600 commitments.

The ever-consistent Cliff Giddens won the Classic Racing Cars title, heading an all-Brabham top six in his BT16.

Matthew Watts was usually the man to beat overall in another BT16, but he was ousted a couple of times – spectacularly at Brands – by Kiwi Ian Jones on rare appearances in his Lotus 59.

Irishman Ian Gray scored some good wins in his Cosworth



BDA-powered BT30 and was delighted with third overall.

A remarkable debut victory by former ARPF3 pilot Mark Dwyer at Donington's season opener upset the Derek Bell Trophy appercart. He started from the back of the grid, having bent his F2 March 742 in qualifying, and sailed past Simon Hadfield's slick-shod F5000 Lola T300 in the closing stages.

Dwyer did no more giant-slaying, for Frank Lyons (Lola T332 and Eagle FA74), Hadfield and Mike Wrigley (T330/332) wound their five-litre Chevrolet-engined cars up thereafter, but he was still named series winner. The acquisition of a Lola T400 will see Dwyer among the big boys next year.

New on the club's ticket, Historic Formula Junior found a natural home for Count Lurani's training class of 1958-'63. The UK title fell to John Truslove and his front-engined Lola Mk2, a Fitzwilliam team car in period.

Derek Walker (ex-Dave Rees Terrier T4) and Bill Grimshaw (ex-Ian Raby Moorland Mk1) kept Truslove honest, but a mid-season engine drama sidelined Walker, inarguably the quickest 'puller' driver, for four months.

Lotus men Mark Woodhouse and ex-champion Michael Hibberd were best of the rear-engined drivers, sandwiching Grimshaw in second and fourth places respectively. Swiftest of the earlier rear-engined competitors was outgoing FIA champion Kevin Musson in his ex-Jose Luis Mulas Lotus 18.

The speed and consistency of Mike Hanna's Hillman Imp decided another unpredictable Historic Saloon series. Seven class wins over triple champ Adrian Oliver, Simon Benoy and Steve Platts, guaranteed Hanna overall triumph.

Jonathan Gomm, who graduated from a Ford Anglia 105E to a Lotus Cortina, was his closest rival, while ex-Fiesta ace Roger Ebdon (Cooper S) bagged the third podium step.

That big bangers appeared rarely mattered not to the closely-matched pack. Bob Bullen's Anglia won outright on the Brands GP circuit, while Neil Wood's raucous 105E and



Roger Godfrey (Cooper S) scored at Croft and Les Ely's BMW 2000 bagged rounds too.

The struggle for Historic Road Sports honours was an epic. Ginetta G4 racer Dave Randall just got the better of defending champion and classmate Andy Shepherd (Lotus 7) for his first outright win at Croft and then landed the crown.

Former winner Robert Barrie split Randall and Shepherd with his trusty Porsche 911 at season's end, but class rivals Mike Eagles (Milano GT) and James Owen (Triumph TR5) were only separated, in Eagles's favour, on countback.

Quickest combo in the field was Laurence Bailey and the TVR Griffith, but an argument with Oulton Park's pitwall dampened a fragmented campaign.

Untouchable in class, John Thomason and his Triumph Spitfire retained their '70s Road Sports title. The Barters, father Charles and son Julian in Datsun 240Z and TVR 3000M respectively, were generally up front though, with Paul Conway a bit too close for junior's comfort in his Morgan +8.

The saloon section was dominated by Bob Trotter's RS2000, and the ex-Special Saloon stalwart finished runner-up in the table, ahead of Conway and Barter Sr.

Les Ely finally grasped the Classic Sports title after several close calls in his Jaguar E-type. A mid-season blow-up presaged a Croft meeting best forgotten, but he outpointed Philip Nelson's fast Marcos GT and Andy Shepherd in his first bid with a Lotus 23.

Invited Sports Racers of a later era, and longer races, increased interest in the arena. Former Historic FF1600 ace Ollie Smith's win, sharing Michael Schryver's Chevron B6 at a sodden Brands, reminded us of a lost talent, while Schryver's battle with Andrew Newall's B8 at the Silverstone finale was sensational. Lotus Elan graduate Stuart Tizzard also earned a fine win at Silverstone in his Lenham.

■ by Marcus Pye

GREAT AND BRITISH

Despite the lack of an obvious headliner and the determination of the weather to lay waste to Dunlop's new Great & British initiative, the company's attempt to create a third promoted package resulted in far more than a glorified clubbie as an exercise in mass-tyre marketing. Even at Pembrey, when the paddock came close to sinking, and at Silverstone, when a freak storm damn-near blew it away, G&B provided vibrant action on and off track. In fact, the weather added drama to a season that started in the damp of Snetterton and closed at a sodden Donington Park.

AVO GINETTA CHAMPIONSHIP

After a disappointing 2005 season, Stewart Linn reclaimed the crown he first won in 2004. If anything, his second crown was more impressive than his first in the ultra-competitive category, which attracted entries of approaching 40 cars.

With nine different race winners (including guest driver Ian Curley) consistency was critical, but the title also went to the most regularly rapid of the frontrunners. While plenty of his rivals had their days, Linn kept the bad days to a minimum.

His setbacks neatly bookended the season. The year started off with him dropping a hatful of points at Oulton Park opener following a clash at Shell with Richard Austin, followed by a spin into the Paddock gravel next time out at Brands. Then came a ballistic run of form. A win in the wet at Donington, followed by two comfortable wins at Castle Combe in June, gave him just the impetus his title campaign needed. A further victory at Silverstone took his win tally to four and meant that he could even survive a cooked engine in the penultimate race at Donington Park.

Dave Devine, who after a couple of narrow misses emerged as Linn's closest contender and hit his stride at Silverstone, winning three of the last five races.

Julian Barratt and Austin both won races but didn't have the consistency for the crown, while fifth-placed Mark Wania reined in his wild man reputation for a formidable second half of the season, including a double at Thruxton.

MINI CHALLENGE

Gareth Nixon simply crushed the opposition in the Club class, winning 13 out of 16 races on his way to taking the overall crown. Inevitably, with 133bhp to the 210bhp of the Cooper S runners, he was never able to mix it for outright race wins, meaning that the title battle was something of a non-event and was resolved with four races to go.

That's not to say there wasn't some spectacular racing,



with former T-Car racer Freddie Nordstrom and defending champion Forster scrapping hard for the top class title. Forster won seven times to Nordstrom's three, but it was the youngster's consistency that earned him the title.

It might have been different for Forster but for some mishaps, including a clash with a backmarker at Brands that left him in the gravel. The defining moment came on the last lap of race two at Croft, when the charging Forster attempted to pass Nordstrom at the hairpin, only to end up in the wall. A supercharger problem in the next race at Spa effectively sealed the deal and gave Nordstrom the class title.

RADICAL ENDURO CHAMPIONSHIP

Heading into the final race at Donington Park, few would have put their money on Radical SR3 driver Nigel Redwood carrying off the title for Team RPM rather than season-long leader James Richardson.

Although Redwood was a massive 34 points down, even a comfortable win in the first race of the finale left him needing a miracle to nick the title. It duly came, as Richardson sustained suspension damage on the opening lap after clashing with Eric Zwart in treacherous conditions.

Redwood went on to win outright after a stunning performance alongside Alex Mortimer. Richardson's stand-in partner Anthony Dunn (Ben Devlin was absent on American Le Mans Series duty) eventually rejoined but, despite finishing after some hasty repairs, failed to complete enough laps to be classified.

That's not to say it was a lucky title for Redwood. Despite finishing the season level on points with Richardson, he won the title by dint of his 10 wins to his rival's six and might have secured the title earlier but for some misfortune early on while Richardson pocketed six wins in the first eight races.



Phil Quaife and Lee Atkins won eight times and already had the SR8 title in the bag when their SR8 self-combusted while Atkins was leading at Donington. Richard Ince and Austin Kinsella were second after their title challenge faltered with an engine problem at Silverstone and a time penalty and puncture at Thruxton in the middle of the season.

RADICAL BIDURO

The Biduro title also fell to RPM, with James Saggars ultimately securing the crown with relative ease. It might have been much more difficult had Guy Hodgkin, who matched Saggars's haul of six wins, not missed May's Pembrey meeting while attending the Monaco Grand Prix.

He was playing catch-up for most of the season and any realistic chance he had of reeling in Saggars vanished when he ended up in the Clervaux gravel at Croft in September while scrapping with his title rival and Daniel Rowbottom.

GINETTA JUNIORS

The pre-season buzz was all about Henry Surtees, son of F1 legend John and, although he was in the thick of the title fight for most of the season, setbacks at Croft and Thruxton left him a deceptively distant third.

Any one of three drivers could have won, but James Harrison edged it from Jordan Williams. Harrison headed to Brands Hatch in August with a handy 12-point lead over Williams, but extended it to 21 when the latter's spin while dicing for the lead in race two dropped him down the order.

Thereafter, Harrison always had the edge over the eventual runner-up, while Surtees' chances were effectively dashed when he was given a penalty after clashing with Williams while dicing for the lead in race one at Croft.

by Edd Straw

Left: Stewart Linn recaptured the Ginetta title he last won in '04

Below left: Young Freddie Nordstrom took top spot in the Mini Challenge

Below right: Nigel Redwood overcame the odds to snatch the Radical Enduro series

CARRERA CUP

THERE WERE really two winners in the 2006 Porsche Carrera Cup GB. Damien Faulkner earned acclaim for taking back-to-back titles, while Danny Watts blitzed to 10 race wins to mark himself out as a rising sportscar star.

This was the best year yet for the Carrera Cup in Britain. The arrival of the new 997-model 911 GT3 Cup car gave the grid a real boost and the creation of the pro-am category presented the middle order drivers with a big prize to chase.

Using Richard Westbrook as a benchmark, the pace of the domestic series compared favourably with that of the Porsche Supercup. Indeed, Westbrook won three Carrera Cup races before concentrating on winning the Supercup. Instead, it was Faulkner who set the standard for Team Parker Racing and was a model of consistency.

Faulkner scaled the podium in 19 of the 20 races, only failing to finish after a big tangle at Thruxton that eliminated a gaggle of frontrunners. But, while Faulkner was always there racking up the points, Watts took over the Westbrook car for Team IRWIN/Red Line and proved a real point by winning 10 times in 16 starts. The title was out of his reach, but the F3 convert was regularly the quickest driver.

Tim Harvey, meanwhile, drove a strong season for Motorbase Performance and was pressing Faulkner in the title race until a nightmare of a weekend at Snetterton in August. He bounced back to fend off Watts for second in the standings, but the title impetus had been lost in the clash with WTCC star Rob Huff in the guest car at Snetterton.

Richard Williams was a fine addition with IN2RACING and got quicker and quicker, while Michael Caine and Jason Templeman were podium finishers when the opportunity arose. Late on, ex-BTCC man James Pickford joined IN2 for the final three weekends and made his mark with a cracking win at Silverstone.

The pro-am category drew in promising youngsters as well as more seasoned contenders. Phil Quaife was the benchmark for Motorbase Performance and well deserved the title with category wins in half of the season's 20 races. His biggest threat was Sam Edwards and, but for a couple of off-kilter weekends, Edwards could have run Quaife even closer. Nigel Rice and Andy Purdie were next in the pro-ams, both impressing despite differing levels of experience. *Paul Lawrence*



CLIO CUP

IT WAS experience versus youth in the final season featuring the Clio Renaultsport 182. Multiple champion Paul Rivett and young charger Tom Onslow-Cole were locked in a fierce battle throughout the year.

In retrospect, it always looked like being Onslow-Cole's title to lose, as Rivett never seemed to have the car under him to challenge the dominant Total Control Racing-run effort of his rival. In the end, Onslow-Cole came good to take an excellent championship triumph.

That said, Boulevard-run Rivett did put up the best fight he could and, during the first four rounds, the victory spoils were shared evenly at two apiece.

However, Rivett's first winless weekend of the season followed at Thruxton, while Onslow-Cole added a crucial third victory. Steven Hunter took a memorable maiden category win in the second Hampshire encounter.

But the deciding factor in the outcome of the championship came, controversially, at Knockhill in Scotland. Rivett was excluded from the results of round seven when he wrongly re-assumed his original place in the order after being pitched into a spin under Safety Car conditions by Nick Adcock. With yet another win, and a second place in round eight, Onslow-Cole's lead had increased to a seemingly insurmountable 79 points.

Three more back-to-back wins followed for the TCR star but then a brace of consecutive non-finishes did offer some hope for Rivett. By this point though, the latter's old sparring partner Martin Byford had made his return to Clios and instantly asserted himself at the front.

Onslow-Cole took three more victories before the end of the year to win the title by an impressive 113 points. Rivett also scored another pair of wins, but it was Byford who stole the show during the later stages of the season. From just 10 starts, his tally of three wins and six further podiums represented an incredible achievement.

Hunter's withdrawal from racing after the Snetterton rounds robbed the series of one of its most determined and popular campaigners, following his dissatisfaction with a scrutineering decision.

On more than one occasion, Steven Colbert seemed set to break his duck but the victory he deserved never quite materialised. Four podiums and third overall in the standings, however, was a good return.

Mark Speller took a surprise debut win at Donington Park during round 16 and Scottish youngster Michael Doyle continued to show fantastic season-long pace; both should be title contenders next season. *Marc Orme*



SEAT CUPRA

TWO WORDS summed up the 2006 SEAT Cupra Championship: Mat Jackson.

From the opening rounds at Brands Hatch, the experienced saloon car campaigner always looked likely to be in the reckoning for the biggest cash prize in British motorsport and, in the end, it turned out to be a dream season for him.

With 11 victories from 18 races, Jackson enjoyed the benefit of a car that seemed to be running on rails for the most part. That's not to dismiss the efforts of the supporting cast though, the series' top six all providing some individually outstanding performances during the year.

In the end Jackson's main competition came, unsurprisingly, from former touring car competitor Alan Blencowe, but he too was pushed hard by 2005 Renault Clio Cup Champion Jonathan Adam. Adam enjoyed a brace of wins, while Blencowe only claimed one victory all year. However, Blencowe's slightly better consistency made the difference in the final reckoning.

Another Clio graduate, Fulvio Mussi, surprised many with his front-running exploits. His first and only win of the season came during round six at Thruxton. Fellow youngster Ben Winrow, meanwhile, made his return to SEATs after a year

away in Clios and a top-five championship finish, including a memorable Croft win, was certainly deserved.

But while some, like the new SEAT champion, had almost entirely trouble-free seasons, there were others who experienced nothing short of disastrous luck – and none more so than Irish star Jonathan Fildes.

The former Clio title winner didn't have a completely barren season – four podiums were the highlight – but if there was a prize for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, Fildes was the one to scoop it.

Former single-seater-champion-turned saloon car star Carl Breeze didn't have the best of campaigns either. A late-season switch to CMS did add more gusto to his challenge and brought him two wins, but ending the year seventh overall was disappointing.

Starting numbers must have caused SEAT a few headaches at times, as little as 12 cars taking the start for round 10 at Donington Park, but the championship did offer some good, close action throughout the year.

It does, however, continue to be the only one-make category in the UK to provide drivers with a genuine financial spring-board to a potential career in touring cars. *Marc Orme*





Above: Graham Fennymore took the Caterham Superlight title

Left: Paul Taylor's Golf emerged triumphant in the VW Cup

Graham Fennymore's experience gave him the edge over Ben De Zille Butler and Guy Harrington in the Caterham Superlight Challenge. Fennymore started the year with a double win at a soggy Donington, with Rachel Green and Will Mitcham sharing the podium in the red-flagged opener. Butler, Simon Crompton and Guy Harrington made it much closer in the second race.

At Snetterton Harrington and Butler took the victory spoils, although a second and third kept Fennymore's title chase on course. The same trio battled it out at Brands Hatch, but another double for Fennymore brought the crown even closer.

A guesting Ben Clucas showed everyone the way round in the first race at Silverstone, but Fennymore headed the interloper in race two and put his title beyond doubt.

Second was still up for grabs at the Brands Hatch finale but, despite his best efforts, Harrington had to give best to Butler, who sealed the runner-up spot with victory in the final race.

With six winners from the 12 rounds, this year's VW Cup was one of the most competitive since its inception. Paul Taylor's Golf took wins at Oulton, a very wet Donington and Snetterton, before a late-season double at Silverstone handed him the title. Martyn Culley and Lloyd Allard both had their share of podium finishes and took their duel for second down to the wire in the final round at Thruxton. Culley's Vento won the race outright to secure the runner-up spot by only two points after Allard's diesel Golf finished third. Tony Gilham's Beetle scored a win at Brands, which helped him secure fourth in the final table, while two podium finishes in the Thruxton finale handed fifth to Steve Wood's Golf.

There was no shortage of action in the Pickups this year,

but it was Nic Grindrod who came to the fore once more, taking both the overall crown – for the second year – and the Rockingham title. Steve Dance, Mark Willis, Gavin Seager and Kelly-Jayne Wells were always in the hunt and regular podium finishers, with Dance taking the runner-up spot to Grindrod in both championships.

This year's SCSA Championship was a shadow of its former self with grids struggling to reach double figures. Oli Playle reigned supreme until the final meeting, when a gear selection problem at the start wiped him out. Mike Luck just held onto the runner-up spot despite a disastrous finale that left him just five points clear of double winner Colin White.

After failing to finish in the opening round, consecutive wins at Pembrey and Donington launched Nigel Reuben towards the Formula Jedi crown. Six further wins secured him the title before the end of the season, despite a strong finish from Brett Parris, who followed his win at Cadwell in round eight with three more. James Southcott, Frazer Corbyn and Russell Small also tasted victory, while Richard Mitcham took the 600cc class.

Despite dominating the season both overall and in class, a lack of numbers in his class left Tim Lewis battling to the final round at Snetterton before he could clinch the Alfa Romeo title in his Sud Sprint. Apart from a double defeat at Pembrey at the hands of Adie Hawkins, Lewis reigned supreme in his class. An exploding clutch at Donington robbed Roger Evans of the crown and lost him the class to brother Kevin.

Two early season retirements cost Chris Yarwood's Tiga dearly in the Sports 2000 Pintos. His otherwise unbeaten run of six victories was still not enough to finish better than third in the final standings. Jim McDougall's Swift took the title, with a 100 per cent finishing record – he was only off the podium on

CLUB FORMULA FORD

MOORE OF THE SAME FOR ED

THREE CHAMPIONS

were crowned from the BRSCC's Formula Ford offerings, with two proven drivers sharing the honours with one bright young talent.

The year started with a new face and a name change. With erstwhile co-ordinator Steve Burns bound for a role at the newly formed Castle Combe Racing Club, Kevin Shortis took over as series manager. One of the first things he did was re-brand the series as Club Formula Ford.

A more significant change was to the regional base of the championship. Out went the old Southern series, with a slightly expanded Midlands calendar adding Brands Hatch to its fixture list and being re-badged as Midlands/South.

In the sprawling Midlands/South region it was Ed Moore's Van Diemen (below) that took the spoils, stretching his unbeaten run at Mallory Park – which held most of the meetings – to 11, dating back four seasons. He won at Snetterton, Silverstone and Brands as well, before his chain of Mallory wins was finally broken in August. Lee Mumford (Marque Cars Reynard 92FF) ended his run, ironically on the same day Moore clinched the title. The 18-year-old won the two remaining rounds before showing strongly at the Festival and Walter Hayes Trophy.

In the North West, two

grids were always required – sometimes with qualification heats for the burgeoning pre-1990 class. Although David Ashton (Reynard 89FF) took three wins from the first four races for Mike Waite Racing, it was 16-year-old Tom Bradshaw who was the real star, particularly when Ashton departed mid-season. Bradshaw was unbeaten for two-thirds of the season and, although he pushed hard, there was always the sense that something was held in reserve.

Meanwhile, in the post-'89 category, John Hutchinson made it five regional titles since the turn of the century in the most open FF1600 contest of the year. Going into the final two rounds any one of four drivers could have won, but Hutchinson was consistent towards the end of the campaign. Significantly, he put a decent run together once the talented Ian Gough left part way through the year, having scored a few wins.

The Zetec part of Club Formula Ford fell apart entirely. Just two events took place: a double-header at Mallory Park ended with just four cars, while a Brands Hatch round was only rescued by an influx of Benelux competitors getting Festival practice. With Duratec now the engine of choice, prospects for reviving Zetec look bleak. *Ian Sowman*



two occasions. Tony Maryon's Lola was a close second.

In the Duratec Championship, Richard Johnson's Van Diemen set the pace all year and won five of the eight rounds. Nick Bates' consistency earned his Lola second place, after wins at Donington and Snetterton.

Consistency paid dividends for Daniel Rose in his Ford Fiesta, as he took the title for the second successive year. Andy Neate came on top in Class A, after a season-long battle with David Abbott and Brian Roper. Mark Robinson also retained his XR Challenge title, with Mike Wright topping the XR3s after finishing runner up last season. Thirteen class wins secured the Ford Saloons title for Rob Wells' Escort, with Stewart Whyte's Escort Cosworth second.

by Peter Scherer

FORMULA PALMER AUDI

VIKTOR JENSEN looked like being an unstoppable force after winning the first four races of the season. Jon Barnes, James Wingfield and Chris Hyman, who won round five at Spa, were consistently running at the front, but they couldn't match the Icelandic teenager for outright pace. After Spa, Viktor was 24 points in front, and the battle looked all but over.

Then, when the series returned to Brands in July, came the moment that defined the season more than any other. In qualifying, Jensen was involved in a spectacular accident after being launched over the top of Giorgio Rosa. He was forced to sit out round six.

This came at the precise time that Barnes, competing in his first season of single-seaters, started to fire on all cylinders. A win in that race wiped out Jensen's lead and the pair shared rounds seven and eight with a win and a second apiece, and left Brands Hatch tied on points.

The final margin of 50 points between the top two showed just how much Barnes was in charge for the latter half of the year, and his well-deserved McLaren

Autosport BRDC Award nomination was the icing on the cake of a superb year for the 23-year-old.

There was little doubt that Barnes had become a serious contender as the series reached Snetterton. He notched up a pair of victories, with Jensen a close second both times. Barnes then took a slender eight-point lead to Dijon, where he obliterated the rest of the field in both races. By contrast, Jensen suffered a desperately difficult weekend and could only manage a fifth and a 10th. His misery in the second race was compounded after he was pushed off on the first lap by Josh Southall.

With a 31-point advantage, only a disaster could prevent Barnes from scooping the title in the final trio of races at Mugello. Sure enough, despite Jensen pushing to the very limit in atrocious weather, Barnes rattled off three more textbook victories, sealing the title with a race to spare and setting new records for wins (nine), consecutive wins (the last seven of the year) and points in a season (326).

Daniel McCalla



JAMES REARNE

HILLCLIMB



JERRY STURMAN

ONCE INTO his stride, Martin Groves' (left) progress to a second successive British Hillclimb crown aboard his Gould-NME was relentless. Single-minded commitment and impressive car control were the hallmarks of a campaign that kept the reigning champion ahead throughout the season, once first round electrical problems had been cured.

"Winning every run-off at Shelsley and breaking Andy Priaulx's Bouley Bay record were the highlights", said Groves. "Winning at Wiscombe after giving the car a good bang earlier in the day was very satisfying too, particularly as people advised me against running."

The championship outcome was never really in doubt but Scott Moran, the season's most improved driver, was Groves' strongest threat by far. Although Moran fell way short of the champion's 21 round wins, nine of his own and two hill records kept him ahead of father Roger, the 1997 champion. Moran Sr took a win on Doune's daunting Stirlingshire slopes and maintained a secure third place on the table.

After no less than 245 British run-off appearances without a win, Simon Durling finally broke his duck with a popular victory in Jersey, following it up a fortnight later with another at Wiscombe Park. The

Shelsley Walsh resident's duel with Mike Dean raged season-long, despite a disastrous start for Dean – a big accident on his very first run of the year at Loton Park. Denied his own first win for the umpteenth time by Groves, the frustrated Dean blew his chances of overhauling Durling for fourth place in the series points table when he ended up in one of Doune's notorious barriers on his last run of the season.

Inevitably overshadowed by driving partner Groves, Paul Ranson shone at Shelsley and Gurston, where a string of top-three finishes netted him sixth place ahead of Chris Merrick, with whom he'd fought all year.

Unfortunately, Rob Turnbull's season was brought to a premature end after an accident at Wiscombe in the potent Cosworth HB-powered Gould, but the veteran competitor finished ahead of Deryk Young's Judd-powered version in which wife Susan regularly rewrote the Shelsley Ladies record.

It was left to Tom New to prevent a top-10 clean sweep by Gould cars. The Pilbeam-Rover V6 driver upheld two-litre honour in the elite group with 10th place, topping of his best-ever year with victory in the class-based PowerMec Leaders Championship.

Jerry Sturman

RALLYCROSS

THIRTY-YEAR-old Christopher Evans became the youngest driver in a generation to win the British crown.

Evans is half the age of the BRC's most successful driver, Dermot Carnegie, who hounded him all season and finished as championship runner-up. Carnegie didn't manage to beat Evans all year, but one who did, and who ended the year with two wins on his slate, is Andrew Jordan.

At just 17, Jordan is a little over half Evans' age and his eventual third place in the championship was way more than he or team boss Will Gollop expected, or dared to hope for in a year in which the teenager stepped up from a 50bhp Mini to a 550bhp Supercar.

Evans' run to the title encompassed four event wins. Perhaps the key events in his year, however, were the first round at Lydden, where he pushed local hero Pat Doran all the way to the chequer, despite the engine in his Opel Astra (right) being in meltdown, and the nursing job he did to bring the car home in the penultimate round at Mondello Park.

On home ground Evans needed only a points finish to be certain of the championship. He'd been on course for a fifth win until a puncture slowed him, but he kept his head and toured to the finish to collect the

points and seal the title.

But for a gear selection problem Jordan may have taken that Mondello win. When he slipped back, however, the race went to veteran Helmut Holfeld. Jordan beat Evans fair and square at Knockhill, and completed an outstanding year with victory in the final at Croft. The round-one win aside there was little good in the year for outgoing champion Doran.

The championship gained former rally drivers Steve Hill, Kevin Procter and Ollie O'Donovan this year. Although none of them had the best car in the field, each showed the sort of pace that will surely make them winners.

It was rare that any of the SuperModified class came close to Dave Bellerby, the class leader generally closer to the Supercars than to his rivals. It was impressive to watch, but demoralising for the others. Numbers, also, were disappointingly low in the category.

Julian Godfrey was top Stock Hatch runner and is set to move up to SuperModified next year, while Ulster teenager Kyle Orr hopes to follow his Junior success with a dual SuperModified and rallying programme. Fast and fearless, Orr has the makings of a star.

Tim Whittington



TIM WHITTINGTON

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Schumacher bows out in style (Oct 26)
Closing the book on Schumacher (Nov 2)
A bright future for Andretti jr? (Nov 9)
European races make way for mayhem (Nov 16)
On Montoya and NASCAR (Nov 23)
Is Hamilton the right man for McLaren? (Nov 30)
Inspired by Epynt (Dec 7)
At the McLaren luncheon (Dec 14/21)

F1's Inside Line by Mark Hughes

May the best man win (Jan 5)
Spilling the beans (Jan 12)
Tactical weapon (Jan 19)
Test of character (Jan 26)
Strata of strategy (Feb 2)
Rossi test analysis (Feb 9)
The V10 time bomb (Feb 16)
Risky business (Feb 23)
The faster show (Mar 2)
Now it's Jensen's year (Mar 9)
Dark clouds gathering (Mar 16)
The new Schu (Mar 23)
Man and machine (Mar 30)
Playing catch-up (Apr 6)
Alonso 'punches above his weight' (Apr 20)
The beauty of Imola (Apr 27)
Defying F1's 'conventional wisdom' (May 4)
Separating the greats from the goods (May 11)
Hero-worship Spanish-style (May 18)
Comparing V8 and V10 lap times (May 25)
F1 and Monaco's glamour link (June 1)
The science of speed (June 8)
Should Lewis Hamilton team up with Alonso? (June 15)
Will aero ban impede Ferrari? (June 22)
F1's fever for youth (June 29)
F1 and US racing should re-align (July 6)
How JPM fell out of love with F1 (July 13)
The insane and beautiful world of F1 (July 20)
The French GP drama you missed (July 27)
Ferrari strikes a blow (Aug 3)
Davidson's joy at Button's win (Aug 10)
Was Button win divine intervention? (Aug 17)
Battle of nerves for Alonso and Schuey (Aug 24)
F1's latest rulings cause confusion (Aug 31)
It's time this genius hung up his helmet (Sep 7)
The cancer growing within F1 (Sep 14)
Turbo steamers: the future of F1? (Sep 21)
Dangers past and present (Sep 28)
War is good in the case of F1 tyres (Oct 5)
Forthright Alonso gains hero status (Oct 12)
Reviewing *The Lost Generation* (Oct 19)
Senna and Schuey's great contribution (Oct 26)
Massa faster than Fisi? (Nov 2)
Repercussions of F1's technical upheaval (Nov 9)
Remembering the early days with Mika

(Nov 16)

How F1 follows the real world (Nov 23)
Three rapid rookies face up to F1 in 2007 (Nov 30)
Alex Zanardi's F1 test (Dec 7)
Rule changes help McLaren (Dec 14/21)

F3 Euroseries

Paul di Resta at ASM (Feb 2—RA)
Manor Motorsport's title ambition (Mar 23—RA)
Season preview (Mar 23—RA)

F3 Euroseries reports

Hockenheim (Apr 13—RA)
Lausitz (May 4—CB)
Oschersleben (May 25—CB)
Brands Hatch (July 6—CB)
Norisring (July 27—CB)
Nurburgring (Aug 24—CB)
Zandvoort (Sep 7—CB)
Barcelona (Sep 28—CB)
Le Mans (Oct 19—CB)
Hockenheim (Nov 2—CB)

F3 reports

Ultimate Masters Zandvoort (Aug 10—RA)
Macau GP (Nov 23—RA)

Formula Nippon/Japanese GT

Changes for '06 season (Feb 23—CB)
Peter Dumbreck back in GTs (Feb 23—ES)

GP2

Fisichella's GP2 team (Jan 5—AVDB)
ART Grand Prix for F1? (Feb 23—AVDB)
Lucas di Grassi joins GP2 grid (Feb 23—RA)
GP2 slick tyre test (Mar 2—AVDB)
Season preview (Apr 6—AVDB)
Trident Racing's new GP2 entry (Apr 6—AVDB)

GP2 reports

Valencia (Apr 13—AVDB)
San Marino (Apr 27—AVDB)
Nurburgring (May 11—AVDB)
Barcelona (May 18—AVDB)
Monaco (June 1—CB)
Silverstone (June 15—AVDB)
Magny-Cours (July 20—AVDB)
Hockenheim (Aug 3—AVDB)
Hungaroring (Aug 10—AVDB)
Istanbul (Aug 31—AVDB)
Monza (Sep 14—AVDB)



Grand Prix 2006

Formula 1 in 2006 (Jan 5—MH)
Adrian Newey's Red Bull move (Jan 5—AC)
Schumacher: is 2006 the end? (Jan 12)
Gary Paffett, McLaren tester (Jan 12—CB)
Wurz's Williams move (Jan 12—AR)
BMW's F1 dream (Jan 19—AC)
BMW F1.06 launch (Jan 19—MH)
Toyota TF106 launch (Jan 19—AR)
Trulli aims for perfection (Jan 19—AR)
Honda RA106 launch (Jan 26—AR)
Rubens vs Jensen (Jan 26—TD)
Ferrari 657 launch (Jan 26—MH)
Renault R26 launch (Feb 2—MH)
Tim Densham on the R26's design (Feb 2—AR)
Williams FW28 launch (Feb 2—AR)
Patrick Head's high hopes (Feb 2—NR)
Midland MF1 launch (Feb 9—AR)
Alex Shnaider on Midland's future (Feb 9—AR)
Tiago Monteiro's second season (Feb 9—CB)
Tech secrets of F1 2006 (Feb 9—GA/MH/GP)
McLaren MP4-21 tech focus

(Feb 16—MH)



Vitantonio Liuzzi's chance to shine

(Feb 16—AC)
Gerhard Berger back in F1 with STR (Feb 23—AR)
Ralf Schumacher—chasing success with Toyota (Feb 23—TD)

Michael Schumacher—why he won't quit (Mar 2)

F1 test special (Mar 2—MH)
Leading tech chiefs on four-way title fight (Mar 30)

Inside Renault for qualifying (Mar 30—AR)
Fernando Alonso, el Matador (Apr 13—AR)

How good is Nico Rosberg? (Apr 20—TD)
Third men Alex Wurz and Anthony Davidson (Apr 20—AR)

Why Honda isn't fulfilling its promise (May 4—AC)
Ross Brawn interview (May 4—AR)

What's with Toyota? (May 25—MH)
The Apprentice (May 25—TD)

McLaren at 40 (June 1—AC)
Franck Montagny (June 1—TD)

Who'll replace Alonso? (June 8—AC)
Montoya's future (June 22—MH)

Jacques Villeneuve (July 13—NR)
Pedro de la Rosa (July 20—AC)

The men behind Button (Aug 17—AR/CB)
Fantastic Four: F1's new order (Aug 24—TD, MH, AVDB, AR)

Jacques Villeneuve interview (Sep 7—AC)
The legacy of Michael Schumacher (Sep 14—MB)

How the secret Kimi-Ferrari deal was done (Sep 21—TD)

Schumacher assessed: the good, the bad and the ugly

GOODYBY MICHAEL

37 reasons we'll miss Schuey (Oct 12)

Scott Speed—saint or sinner (Oct 26—AC)

Is Schumacher F1's Maradona? (Nov 2—S8)

Schumacher top 10 (Nov 2—MH)

What the Germans and Italians thought of Schumacher (Nov 2—MGB/RC)

Robert Kubica (Nov 9—AR)

McLaren—good enough for Alonso? (Nov 9—AR)

Renault's technical masterminds (Nov 16—AR/AVDB)

How good is Massa? (Dec 7—AC)

Grand Prix previews

Bahrain (Mar 9)
Malaysia (Mar 16)
Australia (Mar 30)
San Marino (Apr 20)
Europe (May 4)
Spain (May 11)
Monaco (May 25)
Britain (June 8)
Canada (June 22)
United States (June 29)
France (July 13)
Germany (July 27)
Hungary (Aug 3)
Italy (Sep 7)
China (Sep 28)
Japan (Oct 5)
Brazil (Oct 19)



Grand Prix reports

Bahrain (Mar 16—MH)
Malaysia (Mar 23—MH)
Australia (Apr 6—MH)
San Marino (Apr 27—MH)
Europe (May 11—MH)
Spain (May 18—MH)
Monaco (June 1—MH)
Britain (June 15—MH)
Canada (June 29—MH)
United States (July 6—MH)
France (July 20—MH)
Germany (Aug 3—MH)
Hungary (Aug 10—MH)
Turkey (Aug 31—MH)
Italy (Sep 14—MH)
China (Oct 5—MH)
Japan (Oct 12—MH)
Brazil (Oct 26—MH)



Grand Prix Masters

Season preview (Apr 27—TR)
Ride with Mansell (Aug 3—RA)
Analysing Mansell's data (Aug 10—MH)

Grand Prix Masters reports

Qatar (May 4—TR)
Silverstone (Aug 17—MS)

Historics

Goodwood Festival of Speed preview (July 6—MS)
Goodwood Festival of Speed (July 13—MP)
Goodwood Revival preview (Aug 31—MS)
Goodwood Revival (Sep 7—MP)

Introducing...

Robert Kubica (Jan 5)
Ben Hanley (Jan 12)
Franck Perera (Feb 2)
Markus Winkelhock (Feb 9)
Guido van der Garde (Feb 16)

Jason Tahinci (Feb 23)
 Graham Rahal (Mar 9)
 Alex Bengue (Apr 13)
 Marcel Costa (Apr 27)
 Colin Braun (Aug 10)
 Garth Tander (Sep 14)
 Sean Edwards (Oct 12)
 Nico Hulkenberg (Oct 26)
IRL IndyCar Series
 Panther Racing (Jan 12—DM)
 Marco Andretti's breakthrough (Jan 26—DM)
 AGR—still the team to beat (Feb 9—JOL)
 Season preview (Mar 16—JOL)
 Scott Dixon's comeback (Mar 16—JOL)
 Season review (Oct 5—JOL)
IRL reports
 Homestead (Mar 30—JOL)
 Miami (Apr 6—JOL)
 Motegi (Apr 27—JOL)
 Indy 500 (June 1—JOL)
 Watkins Glen (June 8—JOL)
 Texas (June 15—JOL)
 Richmond (June 29—JOL)
 Kansas (July 6—JOL)
 Nashville (July 20—JOL)
 Milwaukee (July 27—JOL)
 Michigan (Aug 3—JOL)
 Kentucky (Aug 17—JOL)
 Sears Point (Aug 31—JOL)
 Chicago (Sep 14—JOL)
Le Mans Series
 Season preview (Apr 6—GW)
 Can Radical's new SR9 win at Donington? (Aug 24—GW)
Le Mans Series reports
 Istanbul (Apr 13—GW)
 Spa-Francorchamps (May 18—GW)
 Nurburgring (July 20—GW)
 Donington Park (Aug 31—GW)
 Jarama (Sep 28—GW)
McLaren Autosport BRDC Award
 Let battle commence (Nov 9—SE)
 The ultimate test (Nov 30—SE)
NASCAR
 NASCAR's Car of Tomorrow (Feb 2—CB)
 Chase for the Cup predictions (Feb 16—CB)
 Tony Stewart's turnaround (Feb 16—BB)
 Marcos Ambrose—from Aussie V8 to NASCAR (Mar 2—TR)
NASCAR reports
 Daytona 500 (Feb 23—TR)
 Fontana (March 2—BM)
 Las Vegas (March 16—JL)
 Atlanta (March 23—BM)
 Bristol (March 30—JL)
 Martinsville (April 6—JL)
 Texas (April 13—BM)
 Phoenix (April 27—BM)
 Talladega (May 4—BM)
 Richmond (May 11—JL)
 Darlington (May 18—JS)
 Charlotte (May 25—JS)
 Charlotte (June 1—TR)
 Dover (June 8—JS)
 Pocono (June 15—JS)
 Michigan (June 22—BM)
 Sears Point (June 29—JL)
 Daytona (July 6—JS)
 Chicagoland (July 13—BM)
 Loudon (July 20—JS)
 Indianapolis (Aug 10—BM)
 Watkins Glen (Aug 17—JL)
 Michigan (Aug 31—BM)
 Bristol (Aug 31—JS)
 Fontana (Sep 7—BM)
 Richmond (Sep 14—JL)
 New Hampshire (Sep 21—JS)
 Dover (Sep 28—NP)
 Kansas (Oct 5—BM)
 Talladega (Oct 12—JL)
 Charlotte (Oct 19—JL)
 Martinsville (Oct 26—BM)
 Atlanta (Nov 2—JL)
 Texas (Nov 9—BM)
 Phoenix (Nov 16—BM)
 Homestead (Nov 23—BM)

National Focus
 Brits flocking to Asian F3 (Jan 5—RA)
 Andrew Kirkaldy (Jan 12—SE)
 New SCSA boss Gavin Wills (Jan 19—RA)
 How good is Duncan Tappin? (Jan 26—SE)
 Caterham racing at classic tracks (Feb 2—NP)
 Peter Dempsey: Ireland's next star? (Feb 16—SE)
 Rallye Sunseeker preview (Feb 23—DE)
 International Historic Motorsport Show report (Mar 2—NP)
 Andrew Jordan's rallycross future (Mar 9—TW)
 Toyota Racing Series (NZ) track test (Mar 16—MP)
 Rob Huff's triple track test (Mar 23—SE)
 Six best national series (Mar 30—KT)
 Premier single-seater series previewed (Apr 6—KT)
 British GT season preview (Apr 13—RA)
 Marshalling in Anglesey (Apr 20—RA)
 Mallory Park's 50th (May 18—MP)
 Formula BMW and British Superbike axes swap seats (June 15—SE)
 Historic racing (June 22—KT)
 Mygale profile (July 6—RA)
 Silverstone classic preview (July 27—KT)
 National Motorsport Week (Aug 10—SE)
 Mike Jordan tests the new Renault Clio Cup (Aug 24—MJ)
 Silverstone 24 Hours preview (Sep 7—KT)
 Bird takes flight in Renault (Sep 21—SE)
 Our man races in Formula Woman (Oct 19—RA)
 Team Tiger in British GT (Nov 2—KT)
 British GT review (Nov 16—KT)
 UK Formula Ford review (Nov 23—KT)
 UK Formula Renault review (Nov 30—SE)
 Formula BMW UK review (Dec 7—SE)
 Pictures of the year (Dec 14/21)
 Drivers of 2006 (Dec 14/21)
Obituaries
 Colin Makin (Feb 2)
 Geoffrey Ward (Feb 2)
 Paul Dana (Mar 30)
 Jorg Bastuck (Mar 30)
 John Jordan (Apr 13)
 Shekhar Mehta (Apr 20)
 Murray Rainey (May 25)
 Johnny Servoz-Gavin (June 1)
 Nikki Stevens (June 29)
 Guido Dacso (Aug 3)
 Creighton Brown (Aug 24)
 Tom DeLaney (Sep 7)
 Peter Brock (Sep 14)
 Raymond Baxter (Sep 21)
 Mark Porter (Oct 12)
 John Hopwood (Nov 2)
 Nick Brittan (Nov 30)
 Ellen Morgan (Dec 14/21)
Race of Champions
 Preview (Dec 7—RA)

Reviews 2005/6
 World of Sport (Jan 5)
 750 Motor Club (Jan 5—MP)
 WTCC (Jan 12—GW)
 FIAT GT (Jan 12—GW)
 A1 Grand Prix (Apr 20—TR)
 Formula 3 (Oct 19—RA)
 GP2 (Oct 26—AVDB)
 BTCC (Nov 2—ES)
 ALMS/LMS (Nov 9—GW)
 DTM (Nov 16—CB)

F3 Euroseries (Nov 16—CB)
 Champ Car (Nov 30—DM)
 Formula 1 (Dec 14/21)
 FIAT GT (Dec 14/21—GB)
 WTCC (Dec 14/21—GW)
Special Features
 Cosworth's motorsport contribution (Jan 12—ES)
 Valentino Rossi's first F1 test (Feb 9—AR)
 Do driver programmes work? (Feb 9—ES)
 100 years of GP racing: pt 1, the Edwardian era (Feb 16—MH)
 Must-see races in 2006 (Mar 2—GB/ES)
 Brits who get paid to race (Mar 2—GW)
 The man who gets drivers fit (Mar 2—GB)
 Best-looking F1 cars (Mar 16—ES)
 100 years of GP racing: pt 2, the roaring '20s (Mar 23—PF)
 Jonathan Palmer—from racer to circuit boss (Mar 30—ES)
 100 years of GP racing: pt 3, the thunderous '30s (Apr 20—PF)
 Top 10 driver celebrations (Apr 27—CB)
 100 years of GP racing: pt 4, the rorty '40s and beyond (May 11—DN)
 Oliver Jarvis in a Maserati (May 18—ES)
 Top 10 Indy 500 Racers (May 25—JOL)
 Iceland Motopark (May 25—AVDB)
 Indy Pro Series Brits (June 1—RA)
 100 years of GP racing: pt 5, the swinging '60s (June 8—ST)
 Renault AK ride (June 22—AVDB)
 Top 10 bust-ups (June 22—CB)
 Damon Hill tests DTM Merc (June 29—SC)
 Top 10 qualifiers (July 13—MH)
 Top 10 shock moves (July 20—CB)

 Racing's green future (July 27—GB, ES, GW, RA, MH)
 100 years of GP racing: pt 6, the glam '70s (July 27—NR)
 DTM vs WTCC (Aug 10—CB)
 A1 GP test (Aug 10—CG)
 First GP wins (Aug 17—RA)
 Top 10 chargers (Aug 17—CB)
 A1 GP in Manchester (Aug 17—TR)
 100 years of GP racing: pt 7, the success-obsessed '80s (Aug 24—DT)
 US racing—why did it split, and can it be reunited? (Sep 21—RM, DM)
 100 years of GP racing: pt 8, safety concerns in the '90s (Sep 21—MH)
 Bernd Schneider (Sep 21—CB)
 Why German F3 is great (Sep 21—MS)
 Fuji Speedway (November 9—AC)
 Learning at La Filiere (November 9—CF)
 Bruno Spengler (November 9—CB)
 100 years of GP racing: pt 9, manufacturer power in the '00s (Nov 16—AR)
 Ferrari challenge (Nov 16—ES)
 Damon Hill interview (Nov 23—DS)
 Why Britain rules racing (Nov 30)
 Motem's packed 2006 (Dec 7)
 Richard Petty (Dec 14/21—NR)
 Alan van der Merwe (Dec 14/21—ES)
 Christmas quiz (Dec 14/21—HHF)
 Top 50 drivers (Dec 14/21)
 Pictures of the year (Dec 14/21)
Sportscars
 GT3 European Championship (Jan 19—GW)
 Daytona 24 Hours preview (Jan 26—GW)
 Le Mans test (June 8—GW)
 Can Pescarolo beat Audi? (June 15—GW)
 Panoz's GT2 win (June 22—HHF)

Swiss Spirit (July 13—GW)
 Audi R8 retrospective (Nov 23—GW)
 James Weaver (Nov 30—GW)
Sportscar reports
 Daytona 24 Hours (Feb 2—GW)
 Le Mans 24 Hours (June 22—GW)
Staff comment
 The WRC's television future (Jan 5—DE)
 Why Karthikeyan deserves an F1 drive (Jan 12—AR)
 Britain's overcrowded racing scene (Jan 19—ES)
 Letting drivers off the manufacturer leash (Jan 26—CB)
 Spotting the stars of the future (Feb 2—SE)
 How Champ Car got oversubscribed (Feb 9—DM)
 Rally Norway's bobsleigh challenge (Feb 16—DE)
 Why old race cars look better (Feb 23—GB)
 Why racing categories should team up (Mar 2—RA)
 Time for some calm debate at the BRDC (Mar 9—DS)
 Why WRC should have a calendar overhaul (Mar 16—DE)
 WSR—the new orange threat in the BTCC (Mar 23—ES)
 Damon Hill's thoughts on F1 (Mar 30—CB)
 Why A1 GP has worked (Apr 6—TR)
 GP2 working as a stand-alone event (Apr 13—AVDB)
 Reflecting on six years at Autosport (Apr 20—PH)
 JCB's Land Speed Record bid (Apr 27—RA)
 Unite, unite, America (May 4—DM)
 DTM team orders (May 11—CB)
 Driving a Ginetta (May 18—KT)
 Lewis and Nico (May 25—SC)
 Russia's new circuit (June 1—GG)
 Turner's BTCC ride (June 8—ES)
 Convivial Silverstone (June 15—AC)
 F1 in Hyde Park (June 22—RA)
 'Beef' Park's memorial (June 29—DE)
 F1 at the Design Museum (July 6—AVDB)
 Burt's nightmare commute (July 13—CB)
 Paul Tracy isn't past it (July 20—DM)
 The need to go green (July 27—GB)
 Akey defeat for Renault (Aug 3—DS)
 Jensen and his old man (Aug 10—AC)
 Sportscar rule-tinkering (Aug 17—GW)
 Why race at Paul Ricard? (Aug 24—GB)
 What about Gary Paffett? (Aug 31—CB)
 Au revoir Montreal (Sep 7—DM)
 Rest in peace, Brocky (Sep 14—HHF)
 Times have changed in British F3 (Sep 21—RA)
 Why club racing needs well-supported grids (Sep 28—ES)
 Bleekemolen rises to the occasion at Zandvoort (Oct 5—KT)
 Australians hate to be beaten (Oct 12—PB)
 Mega McRae's staura (Oct 19—DE)
 Allmendinger—doing the unthinkable (Oct 26—DM)
 Schuey's goodbye parade (Nov 2—ES)
 Walter Hayes trophy (Nov 9—KT)
 Self-destructive Frenzen (Nov 16—CB)
 Mike Conway has made an important statement for British F3 (Nov 23—RA)
 How we did the powerlist (Nov 30—GB)
 The Autosport Awards (Dec 7—DS)
 Rockingham BTCC (Dec 14/21—ES)
Supplements
 Formula 1 season preview (Mar 9)
 DTM season preview (Apr 6)
 British GP preview (June 1)
 Le Mans preview (June 8)
 Wales Rally GB (Nov 30)
Top Story
 Toyota joins race to sign Raikkonen (Jan 5—AR)
 New Renault's tech secrets revealed (Jan 12—AR)

Ferrari follows rivals' aero lead (Jan 19—AR)
 'Low-risk' McLaren key to title revenge (Jan 26—AR)
 Alonso: I will give my all to Renault in 2006 (Feb 2—AR)
 Rossi 'only tenths' from Schuey pace (Feb 9—MH/AR)
 Berger back—and straight into Toro Rosso controversy (Feb 16—AR)
 Extra Bahrain test key for Ferrari (Feb 23—AR/MH)
 Prodrive gears up for F1 assault (Mar 2—TD)
 Ecclestone: Button for title fight (Mar 9—AR)
 F1 set for closest season in years (Mar 16—AR)
 Honda vows to play aero game (Mar 23—AR)
 Webber and Williams on song for Oz (Mar 30—AR)
 Button: we must find tyre fix now (Apr 6—AR)
 Bernie offers '50-50 deal' to run British GP (Apr 13—DS)
 Renault: 'We're in for '08' (Apr 20—AR)
 Marlboro's \$70m Ferrari masterplan (Apr 27—AR)
 Hill warns over Silverstone (May 4—AR)
 Renault admits championship fears (May 11—AR)
 Renault bids for Kimi (May 18—AR)
 McLaren targets Monaco fightback (May 25—AVDB/CB)
 Hamilton in McLaren frame (June 1—AVDB)
 Schuey aims for British GP win (June 8—AR)
 Honda in crisis (June 15—AR)
 Renault closes in on Kimi (June 22—AR)
 Judgement day for US GP (June 29—AR)
 Montoya's options fade (July 6—AR)
 Why JPM ditched for NASCAR (July 13—AR)
 Can Schuey steal the title? (July 20—AR)
 Toyota deal safeguards Williams (July 27—AR)
 2007: Ross Brawn out, Kimi Raikkonen in at Ferrari (Aug 3—AR)
 Damon Hill: there's no stopping Jensen (Aug 10—AR)
 Renault's damper D-day (Aug 17—AR)
 Schuey 'hot' for title chase (Aug 24—AR)
 Massa waits on Schumacher (Aug 31—AR)
 Bristore: stability is essential (Sep 7—AR)
 Schuey: I was forced to make announcement (Sep 14—AR)
 Hamilton kick-starts bid for McLaren drive (Sep 21—AVDB)
 How the Schuey vs Alonso title battle breaks down (Sep 28—MS)
 Renault: we're faster than Ferrari (Oct 5—AR)
 Renault faces Brazil strategy conundrum (Oct 12—AR)
 Schuey to go out fighting (Oct 19—AR)
 Renault targets triple crown (Oct 26—AR)
 Ferrari tech department safe, says Brawn (Nov 2—AR/ES)
 Red Bull completes technical dream team (Nov 9—AR)
 Hakkinen's secret F1 tests (Nov 16—AR)
 Pridoux is 'the Schumacher of touring cars' (Nov 23—GW)
 McLaren signs Hamilton (Nov 30—AR)
 Chassis sharing row (Dec 7—AC)
 Bourdais tests Toro Rosso (Dec 14/21—ES)
Track Test
 Panoz Esperante GT LM (July 13—BC)
 Porsche RS Spyder (Nov 30—CH)
 P1 Powerboat (Dec 14/21—AM)
World Series by Renault
 Season preview (Apr 20—ES)
 Robbie Kerr and Sean McIntosh, KTR's new hopefuls (Apr 20—AVDB)
 Comtec Racing (Nov 23—GF)
WTCC
 WTCC and the Touring Car Bureau

(Mar 30—GW)
 Season preview (Mar 30—GW)
 Brands memories (May 18—GW)
WTCC reports
 Monza (Apr 6—GW)
 Magny-Cours (May 4—GW)
 Brands Hatch (May 25—GW)
 Oschersleben (June 8—SE)
 Curitiba (July 6—GW)
 Puebla (Aug 3—GW)
 Bmo (Sep 7—GW)
 Istanbul (Sep 28—DS)
 Valencia (Oct 12—GW)
 Macau (Nov 23—GW)

World Rally
 Markko Martin's rally return (Jan 5—DE)
 Marcus Gronholm's Ford future (Jan 12—DE)
 Dakar Hammer (Jan 12—PM)
 Petter Solberg's title ambition (Jan 19—DE)
 Matthew Wilson—Britain's new WRC hope (Jan 19—DE)
 Why Loeb could still reign (Feb 2—DE)
 Rally Norway's WRC bid (Feb 16—DE)
 David Lapworth's best WRC memories (Mar 16—DE)
 Ex-Rallies Commission president Jacques Regis speaks out (Mar 23—DE)
 Alister McRae's lost WRC opportunity (Apr 20—DE)
 Petter Solberg: keeping faith with Subaru (Apr 27—DE)
 Asphalt rally aces (May 11—DE)
 Kosti Katajamaki (June 1—DE)
 Kronos Racing (June 15—DE)
 S2000 vs Group N (June 29—RH)
 Richard Burns' cars (July 6—DE)
 Dani Sordo (July 27—DE)
 WRC on a break (Aug 3—DE)
 Why Wilks and Meeke are still waiting for their WRC break (Aug 31—DE)
World Rally previews
 Season preview (Jan 19—DE)
 Sweden (Feb 2—DE)
 Mexico (Mar 2—DE)
 Catalunya (Mar 23—DE)
 Corsica (Apr 6—DE)
 Italy (May 18—DE)
 Greece (June 1—DE)
 Germany (Aug 10—AP)
 Finland (Aug 17—AP)
 Japan (Aug 31—DE)
 Cyprus (Sep 21—DE)
 Turkey (Oct 12—DE)
 Australia (Oct 26—DE)
 New Zealand (Nov 16—DE)
World Rally reports
 Monte Carlo (Jan 26—DE)
 Sweden (Feb 9—DE)
 Mexico (Mar 9—DE)
 Catalunya (Mar 30—DE)
 Corsica (Apr 13—DE)
 Argentina (May 4—DE)
 Italy (May 25—DE)
 Greece (June 8—DE)
 Germany (Aug 17—AP)
 Finland (Aug 24—DE)
 Japan (Sep 7—DE)
 Cyprus (Sep 28—AP)
 Turkey (Oct 19—DE)
 Australia (Nov 2—DE)
 New Zealand (Nov 23—DE)
 Great Britain (Dec 7—DE)

Key
 GA—Gary Anderson
 RA—Richard Asher
 SB—Simon Barnes
 GB—Gemma Briggs
 GCB—Gillian Bell
 BB—Ben Blake
 JB—John Bone
 CB—Charles Bradley
 PB—Phil Branagan
 MB—Martin Brundle
 MGB—Mathias Brunner
 RC—Roberto Chinchero
 SC—Stuart Codling
 BC—Ben Collins
 AC—Adam Cooper
 TD—Tony Dodgins
 SE—Steven English
 DE—David Evans
 PF—Paul Fearnley
 GF—Glenn Freeman
 CG—Colin Goodwin
 GG—Gregory Golyshev
 CH—Chris Harris
 RH—Robbie Head
 PH—Peter Hodges
 HHF—Henry Hope-Frost
 MH—Mark Hughes
 JJ—Jonathan Ingram
 MJ—Mike Jordan
 GK—Gordon Kirby
 DM—David Malsher
 AM—Allan McNish
 PM—Peter Mills
 DN—Doug Nye
 JOL—Jeff Olson
 AP—Anthony Peacock
 NP—Nick Phillips
 GP—Giorgio Piola
 MP—Marcus Pye
 TR—Timothy Redmayne
 NR—Nigel Roebuck
 AR—Anthony Rowlinson
 CS—Connell Sanders
 JS—Jeremy Shaw
 MS—Marcus Simmons
 DS—Damien Smith
 ES—Edd Straw
 ST—Simon Taylor
 DT—David Tremayne
 KT—Kevin Turner
 AVDB—Andrew van de Burt
 GW—Gary Watkins
 TW—Tim Whittington

1984 PARIS-DAKAR RALLY

Multiple Grand Prix and Le Mans 24 Hours winner Jacky Ickx begins the defence of his Paris-Dakar Rally victory with a Rothmans-backed, four-wheel-drive Porsche 911. The Belgian legend leads the field away from the Place de la Concorde in host city Paris



OVER 10,000 people turned out in Paris on New Year's Day to witness the start of the sixth Paris-Dakar Rally Raid. Among the competitors were some of the world's best drivers.

While most of us were recovering from the excesses of New Year's Eve, a vast army of nearly 200 left Paris for the sixth African adventure. Such is the popularity of the event (perhaps due in some part to the efforts of Mark Thatcher...) that over 100,000 spectators turned out to see the start.

Ahead of the crews, who feature among its number, an array of race and rally drivers, film stars and bobsleigh competitors, lay a 10,000km route through the deserts of Africa. The competitors will venture into Algeria, Niger, Upper Volta, the Ivory Coast, Guinea and Senegal before the finish in Dakar on January 20.

The Paris-Dakar is an extraordinary event indeed. Forget Lancia Rally 037s, Audi Quattros and the rest of the exotic machinery that usually graces a rally special stage. For this challenge the usual choice is Lada Niva, Mitsubishi Shogun or even MAN truck. Anything that can drag itself across the sand is likely to have crossed the start ramp in Paris's Champs Elysees on New Year's day.

But there are some 'special' versions of more recognisable vehicles. Jacky Ickx, multiple winner of the Le Mans 24 Hour race and first home on the Paris-Dakar last year, has a Rothmans-backed, four-wheel-drive Porsche 911 at his disposal. For the fourth time, Ickx will have French film star Claude Brasseur alongside. Ickx led away the 253 cars, 113 bikes and 31 trucks from the Place de la Concorde and was in confident mood and optimistic of a repeat victory... *Autosport, January 5 1984*

RARE VIEW



JACK OF ALL TRADES

He's better known nowadays for his exploits in Subaru Impreza WRC and Aston Martin DBR9 machinery, but Stephane Sarrazin used to be an F1 driver. Yup, he did the '99 Brazilian GP for Minardi but crashed on lap 31

ANNIVERSARIES

DECEMBER 28

Matt Davies (b 1976)

DECEMBER 29

Andrea Aghini (b 1963)
Helmut Kelleners (b 1938)
Allan McNish (b 1969)

DECEMBER 30

Emmanuel Clerico (b 1969)
Guy Edwards (b 1942)
Mike Spence (b 1936, d May 7 1968)

DECEMBER 31

Malcolm Campbell (d 1948)
Tony Kanaan (b 1974)
Danny Watts (b 1979)

JANUARY 1

Mike Blanchet (b 1948)
Francois Chatriot (b 1952)
Jacky Ickx (b 1945)
Martin Schanche (b 1945)
Hap Sharp (b 1928, d May 7 1993)
Hans-Joachim Stuck (b 1951)

JANUARY 2

Beppe Gabbiani (b 1957)
Robby Gordon (b 1969)
Harry Nuttall (b 1963)

JANUARY 3

Ove Andersson (b 1938)
Fritz Huschke von Hanstein (b 1911, d March 5 1995)
Willy T Ribbs (b 1956)
Michael Schumacher (b 1969)
Russell Spence (b 1960)



Ickx: 62 on New Year's Day

THE FINAL FINAL FEVER by Henry Hope-Frost

Sadly for you knowledgeable types, this is the last in the series of Final Fever, so make the most of it! Christmas is done and you'll need something to liven up those dull days before the New Year. Post your answers, marked 'Final Fever', to the address on page 16 or email them to autosport.letters@haynet.com.

TOP DRAWER

- 1 Which two world championship seasons began on New Year's day?
- 2 Where and when did Giancarlo Baghetti score his first grand prix victory?
- 3 What was Alex Zanardi's best result in his ill-fated 2001 Champ Car season?
- 4 Who gave Tyrrell two points-scoring finishes in the 1985 FIA European Formula 3000 Championship?
- 5 Name all the FIA F3000 Champions who have never raced in Formula 1.

MUD, SWEAT AND GEARS

- 6 On which world rally championship event was Hannu Mikkola co-driven by one of his Audi engineers Roland Gumpert?
- 7 Ilka Minor is the first female to finish on the podium of a WRC event since whom?
- 8 Who co-drove Mark Higgins to his best result on his home rally, Rally GB 2002?

- 9 RAC Rally 1985 aside, when and where did Tony Pond take his other WRC podium finish?
- 10 Who are the only two drivers who won WRC events in a Mk1 and Mk2 Ford Escort?

ROOFED RACERS

- 11 What was the real name of 1980s Jaguar touring car racer Chuck Nicholson?
- 12 Which four drivers won the British Touring Car Championship at the wheel of a Mini?
- 13 What was the real name of 1969 European Touring Car Champion (1000cc class) 'Pam'?
- 14 In which year did the Nurburgring Nordschleife host its last DTM race?
- 15 In which four NASCAR modern era years did the winner of the opening race go on to take the drivers' title?

SPORTING CHANCE

- 16 Who was the only driver to have won the Carrera Panamericana, Mille Miglia and Targa Florio road races?
- 17 Apart from Hans Stuck at Le Mans, who was the only non-Sauber driver to start a round of the 1988 World Sportscar Championship from pole position?
- 18 Where and when did Briton James Weaver finish on a World Sportscar podium for Sauber?
- 19 Name all six British drivers who have won

FIA GT races since 1997.

- 20 Which three drivers were Peugeot teammates at Le Mans in 1991, 1992 and 1993?

GRASS ROOTS

- 21 How many grand prix wins have been scored by winners of the McLaren/Autosport BRDC Award?

- 22 How many chassis manufacturers won British Formula Ford races in 2006?

- 23 Who, where and when, gave Chevron its only British F3 Championship race win?

- 24 After whom is the British F3 champion team and Macau winner Double R named?

- 25 Who won the British Hillclimb Championship in a four-wheel-drive BRM?

Where did Alex Zanardi score his best finish of the 2001 Champ Car season?



BEFORE THEY WERE FAMOUS MAX MOSLEY

FIA PRESIDENT Max Mosley was one of the founders of March in the '60s—indeed he was the 'M' in the famous team's nomenclature—and this is him at Brands Hatch in 1972.



PHOTOS: LAT ARCHIVE

Answers in next week's issue (January 4 2007)

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